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IN HONOUR BOUND.

BY

CHARLES GIBBON,

AUTHOR OF "ROBIN GRAY," "FOR LACK OF GOLD," "FOR THE
KING," ETC.

"A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food ;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."
WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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1874.

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To LADY CONE, of Kinellan, the daughter of Burns's "Bonnie Leslie," I dedicate this book, in token of admiration and respect for one whose days are devoted to the good work of making others happy; and in token of affectionate gratitude for a never-failing sympathy which has many times dispelled morbid moods, and blessed me with the inspiration of Courage and Hope. The influence which that sympathy has exercised over my life is my happiest experience; and I wish to utter here my heartfelt thankfulness for the good fortune which gave me such a friend.

London, September 26th, 1874.

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IN HONOUR BOUND.

CHAPTER I.

MONEY,



HERE was much commotion in the district of Kingshaven when the report circulated that George Methven was dead. It was not so much his death which caused the commotion as the rumours of the enormous wealth he had left behind him. Some said he had left half a million ; others that a million was more like the thing ; others again that the sum amounted to nearly two millions in bonds, shares, and stock of various kinds. It was therefore natural that

profound interest should be taken in the man's death : the wonder is that the good folk did not insist upon a public funeral—for was not the late George Methven a millionaire ?

The people of Kingshaven, who regarded ten thousand as a handsome fortune, and who considered themselves exceedingly prosperous when their income passed five hundred a-year—a degree of prosperity demanding extra diligence in well-doing (that is, increasing the store), and punctual kirk-attendance—stared at each other in blank amazement as they listened to the reports of the fabulous wealth acquired by Geordie Methven. The deceased was still mentioned by the inhabitants of his native place as plain “Geordie,” sometimes “poor Geordie” Methven.

“I doubt it's not all well come by,” observed the provost—a man of position and means. He owned property in the town ; and lately—to please his wife, who

wished to spite her neighbours—he had braved the jeers of his brethren, and started a brougham (second-hand). But he was a bold man, and having made the innovation, he was resolved to extract from it the greatest amount of credit which could be extracted. So, towards the close of any social gathering, you would hear the provost demanding in a loud voice if his “carriage *and* lamps” had come. Never before had a magistrate of Kingshaven presumed to any grander vehicle than a dog-cart.

“Geordie was a queer lad,” said Todd the miller; “but we’re a’ deadly and lively, and it must come some day.” He was very solemn, but somewhat vague; probably he was the more impressive in consequence.

“He was never married,” was the comment of Brunton the farmer, who thought he had solved the problem of Methven’s riches. He had been himself twice married.

“Well, well, well,” continued the provost

with an air of retrospective patronage, "if I had only known what he was to come to, I might have helped the laddie."

"He seems to have got on pretty well without your help," was the disagreeable rejoinder of the bailie, who was also the oldest doctor of the town.

The provost walked home, thoughtful.

"Who is to be the heir?" inquired his wife, Mrs. Dubbieside; "will it be Dal-mahoy?"

"More like to be Thorston's lass, if it's anybody. But there's no saying how it will go, for I hear there's no will, and the property will fall to the nearest friends. I wonder if any of our forebears were connected."

The eyes of Mrs. Dubbieside started on her fat cheeks at the mere possibility of a relationship about which, not long ago, she would have been discreetly silent if it had existed. She was a short, stout Lancashire woman, and she was described by the bailie's

wife as "a poor creature who was always ailing and always cooking."

The provost and his wife laid their heads together, and devoted the day to a diligent study of genealogy, ranging as far as fourth and fifth cousins seven times removed. There were other people occupied at that moment in similar exciting speculations.

George Methven was a natural child ; his mother, a poor lass, who died soon after his birth ; his father, a wild young laird, who never remembered the existence of the boy, and who had happened to be married to a wealthy widow on the very day George was born.

The child was left to the care of his maternal grandmother : an honest, hard-working woman, who had too much respect for the "gentry," and too much awe, to make any fuss about the misfortune of her daughter. She belonged to that class of dames who were ready to say, as one had

said to a son who had offended his chief, "Come awa and be hanged, Dugald, to please the laird."

Mrs. Methven's system of nursing was singularly simple. She filled a common bottle with milk, warm water, and a little coarse sugar; next she tied a piece of soft rag, in several folds, over the mouth of the bottle which she placed beside the baby on the floor. Then she went forth to her work in the fields. Perhaps a neighbour wife would step in during the day to see how the bairn was getting on; otherwise he was left to hug his bottle-mother until granny returned home in the evening.

And the child lived! Not only lived, but became so venturesome that soon granny found it necessary to tie him to the leg of the table during her absence. At eighteen months he was firm on his feet; at two years he had to be sent to an infant-school to keep him out of mischief.

The school was a small room in a sort of

hut, kept by a half-witted creature called Singgy Brod—"Singgy," a nickname suggested by the man's sing-song intonation of speech. Nobody knew whence Singgy had come; but he had been so long settled in the district that the people accepted him as a permanent institution. Droll, too, that nobody remembered Singgy as anything but what he was when George Methven became his pupil—a little wiry old man, with lank iron-gray hair, and dressed in a long frock-coat, brown with age and diversified with patches. His hut contained a single room; and he took charge of all the children who had to be left unprotected by their natural guardians during working-hours. Singgy's was, in a manner, a feeder to the parish school—at which he was never wearied scoffing. He did manage to instil into his pupils a dim idea that the alphabet by certain magical combinations formed words, and a few of the children acquired the art of making bad pot-hooks. But in winter Singgy

was chiefly occupied trying to keep up a fire with very little peat and no coal—down on his knees, alternately puffing at the feeble flame and scolding the urchins; and in summer he generally began his day's work with the announcement—

“We'll have no school to-day, bairns; we'll awa to the burn and fush for minnows.”

The infants, delighted to get out to the sunshine, raised a joyful shout, and followed their master. In the course of these excursions he would sometimes obtain a penny-worth of candy from the perambulating rag and bone merchant; with this confection—made of treacle and flour—he would treat all the good boys and girls, and the bad ones equally; for although Singgy threatened much, he seldom carried his punishment beyond the threat. He fared well enough himself, for usually he stepped into the nearest farm-house at dinner-hour, and nobody ever thought of denying him a share

of whatever might be on the table, Sometimes he would fix upon the house where he intended to dine, and he would call in the morning to intimate his intention, also to direct the goodwife to "be sure and put ingans in the broth."

All this freedom was rarely resented. Singgy [was pitied and laughed at with an undercurrent of liking; for he always carried in his hand a torn dirty copy of Horace (which he was never known to read); and Latin and the Church being so closely allied in the agricultural mind, the book served as a talisman which secured for the owner food and endurance.

By this man, George Methven was conducted to the threshold of the beautiful world of which reading, writing, and arithmetic are the gates. The boy actually did learn something; he had an instinctive power of acquisition of the meaning and spirit of the lessons which were set before him; and at seven he could read the whole of the first horn-book!

There is no telling what he might have been able to do at that age, if he had been brought up by an experienced crammer ; as it was, the little he could do was a marvellous achievement under the circumstances. It was fortunate for him that he had succeeded so well ; for at this period granny died, and he was left homeless, without a friend able or willing to pay on his account the moderate penny a week which was Singgy's charge for tuition. But the schoolmaster did not desert his pupil ; he took care of him for a year—making some profit out of his benevolence, it must be owned ; but then benevolence is so much more enjoyable when it is profitable—and after that placed him with a small farmer as a herd.

Geordie was only about eight when he began the real work of life. In return for his services in herding sheep and cattle, he had food, and a corner of the stable-loft to sleep in at night, besides any cast-off clothes which the farmer's wife might give him. At ten, he

earned a few shillings as wages, in addition to food and lodging. On the hill-side during the day, by the kitchen fire at night, he spelled through every scrap of printed matter which fell in his way, and he exercised his penmanship with the aid of a bit of slate which had been blown off a roof, and a piece of pencil which had been given to him by one of the farmer's children. At twelve he could read tolerably, and write plainly, thanks in some measure to the hours which Singgy spent with him during the bright summer days when study and herding were congenial occupations, and thanks still more to his own dogged resolution to learn.

The boy was not much liked ; he was too silent—dour, he was often called. He performed whatever task was set before him, but there was no alacrity in his movements, no sign of pleasure in his work ; and although he seldom blundered, he was set down as a very stupid, discontented lad, who would come to no good. He was conscious of the little

esteem in which he was held ; yet he did not try to win favour. On several occasions he had been abused as an "ill-getted loon," and reminded of his illegitimate existence. He hung his head and made no reply, but the reproach sank deep in his nature. The world seemed to him a very hard place to live in, and the future very blank. He was shy and nervous. There was a pinched, eager look in his face, and never a glint of warmth. The face seemed to reflect the warped condition of the poor child's heart.

One cold day when the east wind, which thereabout was known very appropriately as "the Razor," was blowing in keenly from the sea, Geordie had to make a journey across the moors to bring sheep down from the hills into the home fields. With his jacket buttoned close up to his neck, his bonnet pulled over his brows, and his head bent against "the Razor," he trudged along the bleak road.

A solitary crow sat on a dilapidated fence, uttering at intervals a melancholy "Caw, caw."

Geordie looked at the bird, and whilst the wind was biting through his jacket, and some thoughts of his own miserable position were passing through his mind, he muttered—

“Caw, caw, you idiot! What for did the Lord gi’e you wings, if it wasna to flee awa from a country like this?”

The crow, frightened by his approach, rose on the wing, and the boy watched it till it disappeared over the trees of a distant plantation.

Geordie wished he could fly. Then it occurred to him that although he had no wings he had legs, and they might be used to as good purpose.

At fourteen he took leave of Kingshaven. He had a red cotton handkerchief in his hand, full of oatcakes and cheese, and he had a white shilling in his pocket. The cakes and cheese sufficed to satisfy his appetite during the day, and at night he slept under the most convenient haystack. So he tramped to Glasgow, the shilling safe in his pocket when he entered

that smoky city. He had also a letter written by the minister of Kingshaven, certifying that he was an honest lad. With the help of this certificate he obtained a situation as message-boy in the office of a small contractor, at a salary of five shillings a week. On that sum he contrived to exist and to save a few pence.

He was painfully methodical in the performance of every act, whether the act affected himself or his master. In three years he was advanced to a stool in the office ; at twenty he was regarded as one of the most valuable of the contractor's assistants ; at twenty-five he was head clerk ; and at thirty he was in Manchester, beginning business in a very humble way on his own account.

He prospered rapidly, marvellously. It seemed as if all the ills of his youth were to be compensated by the unprecedented success of his manhood. Everything he touched seemed to turn to gold. Amongst Manchester men it became a business to note the

speculations in which Methven interested himself, and to leap at them the instant they were assured that he was "in the swim," satisfied that the results must be profitable. His "good luck," the title which people like to give to clear vision and steadfast work, never failed him. The confidence he inspired was unlimited. There was a serious crisis in his affairs, as there is in the affairs of every man. He went to the bank, told the directors plainly his position, and the risk they would run in trusting him. They were a little frightened, but they trusted him. The bank gained a hundred thousand through the faith of its directors, and Methven was established as a millionaire.

The man was cold, silent, dour, as the boy had been. His life was a sort of golden nightmare. There was in it no love, which is the sun of life. He had no friends, no affections. No woman's shadow crossed his thoughts, to interfere with entire devotion to business success. He gave large sums to

charities, he assisted the deserving, he paid his full income-tax—and there his moral responsibilities appeared to end. If he had regrets, desires, or hopes outside his ledger, they were never apparent in word, act, or look.

One grateful act he had performed. He had brought his old dominie from the hut at Kingshaven, and established him in his Manchester palace. He clothed him anew, made him an allowance for pocket-money, which in the dazed eyes of Singgy Brod was unbounded wealth, and the servants were directed to attend to his wishes as they would to their master's.

At first Singgy was dumb with bewilderment. He was humble, grateful, although he sometimes sighed for the freedom of his hut and rags. He was afraid of the servants, and slunk out of their way as quietly as possible. He was afraid to use the beautiful furniture of the grand mansion. Dinner was a daily torture to him. He never dared to ask for

“ingans” in the soup now. He ate in fear and trembling lest the butler should be offended, and was always anxious to save trouble by using one plate throughout the meal. The exclamation he had uttered on his arrival was continually rising in his throat, and half choking him as he gulped it down—

“Man, Geordie, it’s no possible that it’s you !”

It was so like enchantment—a modern version of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp. Some day it would all disappear just as suddenly as Aladdin’s palace, and he would find himself back in the old hut, with the bairns squalling around him. He thought he would prepare for the evil day, and he began to hoard his allowance. But as time passed and the dreaded transformation did not take place, his mood changed. He began to think, “It is to me that Geordie owes all this. If it had not been for me, where would he have been ? Certainly not here.”

This idea developed gradually into a con-

viction that whatever Methven possessed, he had a right to share it. Presently, instead of being timid in dealing with the domestics, he took to bullying them. He detected waste everywhere; with nervous anxiety to punish the delinquents, he took to listening at key-holes and spying into drawers and cupboards. He roundly abused the whole staff, from scullion to butler, for robbing *him*. The servants grumbled at this tyranny; but Methven would not interfere. In consequence there were frequent changes in the household, and soon there was not left one of the domestics who had witnessed the dominie's arrival.

Then the old man felt more at ease, but he did not relax his vigilance, and his parsimonious ways became more marked than before. He had been happy as a vagrant school-master, depending almost upon charity for his dinner; he was miserable with wealth at his command. The gold-fever had entered into the poor creature's blood, and had wrought a

greater transformation in his nature than in his circumstances. It was the passion of the miser which possessed him. He had no sense of the power of happiness with which the genius of benevolence can inspire money; it was the gold itself he loved. Formerly he had seldom had the opportunity to rub two coppers together; now his one amusement was to sit with a roll of sovereigns, slowly dropping them from one hand to the other, and listening with pitiful glee to the music they made.

By-and-by he found another occupation in watching with greedy interest Methven's movements and progress. He began to consider who were Methven's relations; to speculate upon the possibility that all the great fortune of his benefactor might descend to himself. The possibility grew into probability, and then into assurance that nobody else could be or should be Methven's heir. He became jealous of every creature who approached him, hunted them away, or with

transparent cunning warned his pupil that they had designs upon him. The last stage of his mania was soon reached ; without the slightest regard to the difference between them in years, the old man waited for the comparatively young man's death.

One day Singgy was thrown into a frenzy, upon learning that George Methven's father—the Laird, now a poor man—was with his son. He revived when he saw the Laird go away with head bowed, humbled and evidently disappointed. All his efforts to learn the result of this visit failed, and he never quite recovered from the effects of the fright it had given him. He took ill—died—railing at his benefactor, wildly accusing Methven of having cheated him, robbed him, and poisoned him. It does, in certain moods, appear unkind of other people to outlive us.

Methven buried his old teacher quietly, erecting a plain marble slab to his memory, inscribed with nothing more than his name and date of death. He never again tried to

make a friend. Friendship and love seemed denied to him, more decidedly now that he was rich than when he had been a poor laddie, herding sheep on the hill-side, striving to acquire knowledge and to attain the something which he had missed, notwithstanding his marvellous success.

“But work cures everything,” was his constant cry; “regrets, the loss of hope, shame, all yield to work.”

So he worked harder than ever, and fortune still favoured all his efforts. In his office, in his house, he was always at work. He sat late in his study; he was there early in the morning; and one morning he was found seated at the writing table, pen in hand, the lamp still burning, although the sun was up, his eyes fixed upon a blank sheet of paper. He was dead: the cause—paralysis.

There was no will; and that circumstance astounded every one who had known the methodical habits of the man. One feasible

explanation was suggested by the solicitors who had transacted much business for the deceased : that it had been Mr. Methven's intention to distribute his wealth whilst living, and thus he had omitted to prepare a will. Whether that was the case or not, here was a great fortune going a-begging for an heir.

CHAPTER II.

THE FISHER-FOLK.



HE cottage of Dan Thorston stood on the high point known as the Norlan' Head, overlooking a little bay, round which the huge black and brown rocks formed a rugged horse-shoe. A few steps from the door of the cottage, was the opening of a perilous footpath which wound round the rocky walls of the bay, down to the pale yellow sand where lay Dan's boat, and where, in a sheltered corner, he had a tar-painted hut for his oars and fishing tackle. The cottage was like two buildings placed lengthwise together, the one being smaller than the other. The walls were of unhewn stone, whitewashed; the

roof, thatch—in colour, a piebald of brown and green—and the two big squat chimneys were carefully bound with straw-rope. It was a weather-beaten building, for it was exposed to every wind that blew. That was why Dan made it his home.

Wind and sea were his comrades; he loved them; they spoke to him—he understood them, and he was happiest when in closest communion with them. There was something of the old Viking in his heart, and much of the Norse blood in his veins. When any one spoke of the dangers of stormy seas, he laughed in wonder. He seemed to have no sense of danger; and in this respect his daughter, Christina, or Teenie as she was always called, resembled him.

“It was just frightsome to see her,” was the opinion of the wives of Rowanden—women who were not cowards—as she clambered over the rocks; or when, in the wildest weather, she stood on the Norlan’

Head, gazing at the storm, and apparently taking delight in the furious strife of the elements. There was something "uncanny" about the bairn, was the unanimous verdict.

Thorston and his daughter were much respected, but in many minds the respect was dashed with a degree of fear. "Master" or "Skipper" Dan, as he was called, on account of a share he had in two whaling vessels, was supposed to be endowed with a special gift for forecasting the weather. At early morning his movements were eagerly observed. If when he looked out he thrust his hands into his pockets, as if satisfied with the appearance of affairs, there was a general race for the boats and a struggle who should be out first. But if Dan raised his hand to his brow as if to concentrate his vision upon some object far out at sea, every man turned into his cot with the growl, "There will be nae fish the-day."

Dan had not sought this singular reputation ; but having obtained it, he was proud of it—sometimes even he would catch himself stooping to some little trick to heighten the fishers' faith in him, and he would feel ashamed of himself. When away upon a whaling expedition, it gratified him to think that he would be missed at Rowanden ; that he would be joyfully welcomed home ; and that during his absence, Teenie would be guarded and cared for as if she were queen of the land.

Although the village of Rowanden was near neighbour to the town of Kingshaven and had many friendly transactions with it, the two communities were quite distinct. The first was entirely composed of fisher-folk ; the second contained the usual mixed population which gathers around flax-mills ship-building yards, fish-curing establishments and agricultural markets. The first stuck fast to its old ways and old superstitions ; the second was eager to be in advance

of the time, and was never done shouting "Progress," as if the mere word were a charm by which miracles could be wrought. The fishers looked on stolidly, and would not believe in the new charm. The nuisance inspector was, in their eyes, himself a nuisance. Folk had lived and died comfortably for hundreds of years before there had been any ado about drainage and atmosphere, and they could not see why they should not be permitted to go on living and dying in their own way as their fathers had done.

The village, from a distance, looked like an irregular pile of whitewashed walls diversified by sheets of black, red, and dark gray, where tarcoated huts, red tiles, or thatch prevailed. Closer inspection showed that the village and its belongings formed three terraces, one rising above the other. First there was the shore, on which were groups of boats, tall stakes overhung with nets like huge cobwebs, black huts for housing oars, cords, floats, baskets, and other fishing-gear; in the back-

ground a dark wall of rock, in which a steep flight of steps had been cut, leading up to the shelf or terrace above. Here were piles of nets, dried, mended, and ready for use ; and upon them lounged men and boys, in rough blue trousers and jackets, smoking, gossiping, and repairing other nets. The women, stout-limbed and healthful, in big white caps, short gray or red-striped petticoats, thick blue or gray stockings, and heavy boots, were busy at large tubs cleaning and salting fish, or preparing bait. On the walls were rows of haddocks drying ; heaps of refuse dotted the sides of the roadway, and the fine fishy atmosphere could be *tasted*. The third row of houses was approached by a steep pathway ; and behind this upper row were patches of vegetable gardens, then rocks and fields.

On the top of the hill stood a white house—the manse ; on the gable facing the village the minister had placed a large barometer, for the benefit of the fishers. During a storm which continued for several days, the women

marched up to the manse and prayed the minister to set the weather-guide to "fair." He endeavoured to explain the nature of the instrument ; but the women were not satisfied. They believed in Skipper Dan's weather-wisdom—they could not believe in this strange machine ; so they took stones and smashed it. Soon after the weather changed for the better, and old Tibbie Gow, who had been a ringleader in the outrage on the barometer, exclaimed triumphantly—

" I tell't you how it would be !—it's just thae new-fangled whigmaleeries that's setting a'-thing wrang. We maun take care o' the minister, for he's a guid sort o' sowl, though he's weak, like a' man bodies."

But foul weather came again, notwithstanding ; wives were widowed and children left fatherless, just as before. Tibbie Gow, however, firmly believed that the storms might have been subdued if she could have only offered to each the sacrifice of a barometer.

There was another ado in the village when

the railway was planned and made. The first intimation of the appearance of a train was given by Willie Stark—a man in years, but a child in mind. He had been at Kingshaven one winter evening, and on his way home saw a train. He burst into his mother's cottage, crying in much wonder,

“Eh, mither, mither! what do you think I saw but the smiddy running awa with a row of houses!”

Another report was made by David Finnie, an old man, who, expressly to see this new monster called a train, walked over to the hill through which a tunnel had been made. He took his stand on the height and observed the animal approaching.

“But I didna think muckle o’ her,” he said, contemptuously; “she came on panting and panting, and tried hard to get up the hill, but as soon as she saw ME!—she just gied a great scraich, and ran into a hole.”

They were slow to appreciate modern improvements, but they were an honest, sturdy

race. Simple in heart, and in many respects commonplace enough in nature, their coarseness was leavened by their kindness, and by a certain unconscious humour in their ways and sayings. Rugged in form and speech as their own rocky coast, they were capable of the tenderest sympathy for the suffering, and of much self-sacrifice to help a neighbour in peril or misfortune. Every bay, every cavern along the coast had its name and legend; every one of the rocky islets, which rose like strange monsters from the sea, dripping and flashing their watery diamonds in the sunlight, was a monument of some sad loss or of some brave deed of rescue. There was the black-looking rock near the bar, ominously named "the Wrecker," on account of the many disasters for which it was accountable. One of the latest incidents which had justified its evil reputation was the destruction of a cobbler from a northern fishing station.

It was midday, and the sea was in one of its angry moods. There were three men and

a boy in the cobble ; they attempted to cross the bar, but the boat struck the rock and capsized. Men, women, and children hastened down to the beach, and six stalwart fellows put off to the rescue. The boy was seen clinging to the keel of the upturned boat, and his piteous cries were heard by those on shore. A great wave was rolling towards him ; it would break above him and destroy him. The people held their breath as they watched the race between the destroyer and the rescue. A woman, at whose breast clung a frightened infant, whilst her eyes were fixed upon the boy in such sore need out yonder, gave voice to the prayer of all who stood by—

“ God !—be near him—he’s some one’s bairn !”

The boy and one of the men were saved.

This was the kind of legend which formed part of the fisher-folk’s lives, and, in their eyes, endowed rocks and sea and wind with a spiritual significance. They had a plain matter-of-fact way of speaking about things

spiritual as well as temporal. Providence was a real presence to them; He walked amongst them, noted their doings, and promptly punished the sinners. They spoke of Him with a familiarity which would have startled a stranger. They carried this matter-of-fact spirit even to their tombstones, on one of which appeared this droll epitaph:—

“Here lies poor Susan Gray;
She would if she could, but she could not stay,
She had two bad legs and a very bad cough,
But it was the two bad legs that carried her off.”

It was written in all seriousness. The conversation of the men was mostly occupied with questions as to the state of the fishing, accidents to the stakes and to comrades, quarrels with the water-bailies in close-time and out of it. Sick men and plaisters, with an occasional diversion about the price of fish and provisions, engaged the tongues of the elder women. Rheumatism was an enemy they had frequent struggles with; and they encountered him with vigorous measures.

“Sandy’s just that bad he canna move hand or foot,” said Jean Watt to a cronie; “but he’s had mustard and vinegar on at the foot o’ the shoulder-blades, and a batter as big as your twa hands, and I canna tell you how muckle salts he’s taken, so I’m thinking he’ll be some better the-morn. What are you paying for tatties now?”

Teenie Thorston grew up amongst these fishermen, sharing in their superstitions, listening to their eerie stories, to their merry or sad ballads—one of themselves apparently, and yet curiously unlike them. “Uncanny,” said all; “a bairn of the storm,” said some; “a sea-kelpie,” said old David Finnie, grinning at his own conceit.

“Eh, but she’s bonnie,” sighed the youths who looked at her, yearning, and dare not speak.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOOK OF FATE.



HE stood at the door of the cottage. A clear day. She could see miles of the bare coast-line guarded by its savage battlements of rock ; the busy port of Kingshaven, nestling in its natural bay, and behind, long stretches of moorland melting into fields of ripe grain, which rolled upward to the mountains, whose bright green plains hung upon the edge of black valleys. Before her, the opal sea, always restless, often furious, flecked with foam and fishing smacks. The colour deepened as the waters reached the horizon, and through a white haze mingled with the sky. All the wrath of the sea appeared to be close at hand ; out yonder there

seemed to be a placid mere, from which came long sweeping waves, graceful, and so calm in their strength, lifting their white crests, beneath which flashed the colours of the rainbow, trembling an instant in the sunlight, then dipping and curving with such gentle lines shoreward, that it seemed a lover in his happiest mood hastening to kiss his mistress. But as they neared the shore, the waves became turbulent, rose in white jagged points, broke in spiteful foam upon the rocks, and retired moaning, disappointed. Within that hazy horizon line those who looked from shore saw, for themselves or those who were dear to them, rough work and danger enough ; beyond it, the discontented or ambitious imagined mysterious possibilities, and gazed long, with vague yearnings ; until, by-and-by, quickened by necessity or hope, some broke the ties of home, and sailed out into the mists of new worlds, to find fortune or despair.

At times Teenie was conscious of these

vague yearnings, and became restless as the sea she loved.

There was a large dovecot above the door of the cottage ; the pigeons were continually fluttering about the roof, cooing and pluming themselves. They were Teenie's pets ; they would gather around her, sit on her shoulders, on her arms, and peck from her hand, but they took flight as soon as a second person appeared. This familiarity with animals was regarded as another element of uncanniness in her character.

The pigeons were flocking about her now. One fine fellow, with a grand sheeny blue breast, was marching up and down before her, cr-r-ooing, dipping his head at intervals to give emphasis to his guttural notes, and patronising his mates with all the pomposity of the provost at a tea-meeting. Teenie spoke to her pets occasionally, but she was much occupied looking down the road towards the village which lay below her, Kingshaven behind it, yellow and black in the sunlight, its

church tower and dissenting steeple rising sharp and clear against the sky.

She stood with the left hand resting on her hip, the other now playing with the fringe of the little blue scarf which was pinned round her neck, and again raised to shade her eyes from the bright rays of the sun. A tall sinewy lass, with wavy fair hair, and plenty of it, hanging down her back ; big blue eyes ; soft rounded features, sun-browned and healthful. Her dress a simple stuff gown, apron, white stockings, and thick-soled shoes. There was a sense of grace and strength in her appearance—beauty, in fact ; the light of blissful ignorance of sorrow in her eyes, and a smile on her lips.

She saw a woman with a square yellow basket on her arm, marching up the hill. Teenie's whole face beamed with delight ; pressing her elbows to her sides, her pets were scattered right and left as she sprang forward to meet the woman, all the poetry of motion in her joyful bounding pace.

“ Have you gotten it, Ailie ?” she cried.

Alison nodded, and Teenie clapped her hands gleefully.

“ Eh, but that’s fine ! Come on ; let’s try it at once !”

Catching the woman’s sleeve, she dragged her towards the house, impatient of her pace, although Alison Burges, having the bones and muscles of a man, walked with the stride of one. Alison was about sixty—clean, neat, and fresh, from the white cap with its huge frill on her head, to the clumsy but serviceable boots on her feet. She had long dry features, marked with red marble lines ; pale gray eyes, in which there was plenty of shrewdness, but not a glimpse of tenderness apparent. She yielded to the impulsive girl, but neither smiled nor frowned.

Inside the house, Alison placed the basket on the table, wiped her dry mouth with the corner of her apron, rested her hands on her sides, and then, shaking her head slowly, she exclaimed, in a sing-song tone, which

might have indicated pity or surprisc, or both—

“Eh, Teenie, Teenie, you may die for want o’ breath, but no for want o’ wiles.”

Teenie laughed, and said, “Haste you.”

Alison deliberately sat down on a wooden chair, the back of which formed a rough imitation of a lyre. Then she lifted her skirts, and after much fumbling found a capacious leathern pouch, from which she produced a small pamphlet, printed on dingy coarse paper. This Alison handled respectfully, and laying it on her knee with much care, smoothed out the creases.

The sun seemed to flash on Teenie’s face. She dropped on her knees, crying—

“Let’s see it ! let’s see it !”

It was one of those penny chap-books which at one time were extensively sold throughout the country by pedlars, and which constituted the chief literature of the people, affording them, in the long winter evenings, delight, wonder, and material for conversation when

they gathered round the kitchen fire. The chap-books comprised sheets of songs, anecdotes—not always particular in regard to delicacy—tales of the Covenant Martyrs, sermons, biographies (one sheet contained the lives of all the Kings of England, from Arthur to George III.), and half a dozen different instructors in the arts of fortune-telling and charm-working, each professing to unveil the future to the dullest eyes. Amongst the sheets of verse, “Chevy Chase” and “Thrummy Cap” were the most popular. Of the serious works a favourite one was “The Life and Wonderful Prophecies of Donald Cargill, who was Executed at the Cross of Edinburgh on the 26th July, 1680, for his Adherence to the Covenant and Work of Reformation.” The most read of the ghost-stories was “The Laird of Cool’s Ghost ;” whilst by far the best relished of the humorous sheets was “The Life and Wonderful Sayings of Geordie Buchanan, the King’s Fool.” That was George Buchanan, the poet and historian, who, when

tutor to the Scottish Solomon, proved his independence by quickening the wits of his majesty by the help of a birch—and he became famous amongst his countrymen in later days as the King's Fool !

The chief favourite of the fortune-telling sheets was the one which Alison held in her hand, entitled "Napoleón Bonaparte's Book of Fate." Beneath the title was a smudgy wood engraving, which represented Bonaparte, in dancing pumps with round buckles, standing on a rock ; arms folded on his breast, head bowed, and the smear of ink intended to indicate his eyes, supposed to be gazing sadly into space, or at four black spots below him which symbolized anything the imagination of the onlooker might suggest.

Turning over the leaf Teenie saw a curious table, called grandly "THE ORACULUM." She had not the least idea what that hard word meant, and therefore looked with some awe at the mystery.

The table was divided into small squares,

each occupied by a letter of the alphabet ; along the top were a series of asterisks arranged in various forms, thus—

*	* *	*	* *	* *
*	*	* *	*	* *
*	* *	*	*	* *
*	*	*	* *	*

and so on. The left-hand side of the page was occupied by sixteen interesting questions :—1. Shall I obtain my wish ? 2. Shall I have success in my undertakings ? 3. Shall I gain or lose in my cause ? 4. Shall I have to live in foreign parts ? &c.

This looked delightfully cabalistic, and promised some amusement.

But there was no suspicion of fun in Alison's mind. She understood the working of the oracle and respected it. She made Teenie write at random four lines of dots. They counted the first line and found that the number of the dots was even, so Teenie was told to mark two dots opposite the end of the

culum," and opposite the second figure was the answer to Teenie's question—

* * "Whatever your desires are, for the pre-
* *
* * sent decline them."

The light of expectation and hope left the girl's face. She knotted the fringe of her scarf and absently tried to unravel it. Then she laughed as if at her own doubts, and said boldly—

"We'll try it again, Ailie."

Ailie was astounded at this irreverence.

"You're not allowed to try the same question twice in the same day; it's no lucky, and it would spoil the charm."

"Then we'll try another one," cried fearless Teenie.

The dotting process was repeated, and after grave consideration Teenie sought the answer to this important question—

"Does the person love and regard me?"

The answer was found—"This love is from the heart and will continue until death."

"That's fine!" she cried, delighted and

ready to believe in the oracle, now that its promise accorded with her wishes. She repeated the gratifying words with a kind of wondering pleasure, as if listening to some one.

She would try her luck again, and now, with something of the reckless or defiant spirit in which the gambler throws his last stake, she demanded—

“Will the marriage be prosperous?”

The answer was given—“Various misfortunes will attend this marriage.”

“It’s just nonsense,” Teenie exclaimed, jumping up, indignant. But the cloud passed immediately; she stooped and whispered to Alison, “And the book does not tell true—for I’ve got my wish, and there he is at the door!”

CHAPTER IV.

YOUNG DALMAHOY.



T was Walter Burnett, Dalmahoy's son, who was at the door. And what was the Laird's son doing there? People had been asking that question frequently of late, with suggestive looks, sly winks, or foreboding shakes of the head. There was no particular reason for this questioning, except that he was the Laird's son and she was Dan Thorston's daughter. But Walter—or young Dalmahoy, as he was generally called to distinguish him from his father, old Dalmahoy—Walter had been from childhood accustomed to visit the cottage.

He used to go out fishing with Thorston, and Teenie—a bare-legged cutty then, flying about in healthy recklessness—used to find bait for the big boy, who brought her handfuls of sweets in exchange. Often she would go out in the boat with them, and she would mend Walter's lines, or bait the hooks when the fish were taking fast, whilst Thorston sat guiding the bark, watching the sail, and attending to his own lines. The boat leaping over the waves, the brown sail flapping between the man and the children, the latter would gossip in this fashion:—

She: "Ha'e you got a bite?"

He: "I think there was a nibble."

"Your bait will be off."

"No, I saw the float bobbin'—there!—aha, I've got him this time!"

He would draw in the line, hand-over-hand, she bending over the side, eyes wide, eagerly watching the arrival of the prize. Then at the first silvery flash in the water, she would clap her hands, crying—

“Eh, it’s a fine ane—it’s a codlin—ca’ canny or you’ll miss him.”

That accident happened occasionally, when Walter in his enthusiasm, panting and anxious, sensible that the hook was not secure in the gills of the fish, was straining his strength as if to convey the energy of his own desire into the line; the prize rose to the surface, half out of the water, and then—snap! a silver gleam, and fish and hook disappeared, a wave washing the boy’s heated face with spray.

“Hoot, you fool!” was Teenie’s exclamation, “you’ve lost him, and he was such a bonnie ane. You’ll not get another chance like that.”

And she would turn contemptuously from him to the lines, whilst Walter, looking sheepish and disappointed, would humbly prepare to try his fortune again.

“You canna catch a’ the fish in the sea,” Dan would say, consolingly, as he quietly hauled in a brace of whittings.

The brave breeze, the refreshing salt smell of the sea, the inspiring pulsations of the boat, and another "bite," presently dispelled from the boy's mind all remembrance of his disappointment, and from Teenie's all sense of scorn.

"There now!" he would shout, his cheeks glowing with joy, as success rewarded his next effort.

"Man, but that's fine!" says Teenie, sharing his joy.

There never was the least shyness between them, and no thought of degree. The only difference Teenie was conscious of observing between Walter and the other boys of the neighbourhood was, that his clothes were never ragged and seldom patched—they were patched sometimes. The material of them—a rough tweed—was not in childish eyes a bit finer than the coarse homespun of the other loons. Then, like them, he went to the parish school, got his palmies like the rest, scrambled and fought amongst them,

conquered or got beaten just like an ordinary boy. It was the proper training for a sturdy youth; and even if he had been in the least priggish or "upsetting," he would have been speedily taught, by the fists of his school-mates, that in the republican playground the strong arm carries the day.

After the parish school—at which girls as well as boys obtained their first lessons, and competed in the same classes—came the Academy at Kingshaven. Every morning Walter, with his brothers and sisters, took his breakfast of porridge and milk in the kitchen—sometimes, as an indulgence, he was allowed to have a cup of coffee—and then he trudged off to the Academy, four miles distant. Besides books he carried in his satchel his "twal-hours" or "piece"—plain bannocks and cheese generally; or, rare delight, a penny in his pouch, with which to buy for his noonday meal the coveted delicacy, a treacle-bapp—a scone of coarse flour cut open and spread with treacle.

On his way home he would halt at the cottage, to hear from Dan some wild story of his whaling adventures, or to tell Teenie how many marbles he had won during the play-hour, or maybe to play a game at "ringgy" with her, or to help her in making some alteration in the dovecot. Then he would trudge on to his motherless home to supper—six o'clock—the preparation of his lessons for the following day, "a chapter," prayers, and bed. Occasionally the evenings were diversified by a merry hour spent with his cousin, Grace Wishart, to whom he was accustomed to appeal for help in all his boyish troubles. She was his senior by two or three years—a vast period in childish eyes—and her quiet ways made her appear to Walter quite a woman. Teenie was his playmate; Grace was his guide and counsellor.

On one occasion, for some slight ailment he was taken by his nurse to Dr. Lumsden—then beginning to be recognized as the esta-

blished surgeon of the district. Walter's old nurse, who believed him to be the most wonderful boy that had ever been born, assured the doctor that the "laddie fashed himself far ower muckle with books."

"You mean that he studies too much," said Dr. Lumsden, pompously.

"Jist that—he's aye reading and stealing candles to read with when a' decent folk are bedded."

"Indeed! and what does he read?"

"I dinna ken—he reads the Bible for ae thing."

"A very excellent work," said the doctor, with something like patronage of the Book and the boy in his tone.

"And he reads Burns?"

The doctor looked disappointed.

"And he reads Shakespeare, and that's a' I ken about."

The doctor lifted his nose contemptuously. He was a man of middle-age, who by every severe effort had passed through college, and

obtained his degree. The moment he had touched his first fee, he felt that he was a superior person to all and everything around him. He knew little of Burns, for he never had time to indulge in miscellaneous reading; nothing of Shakespeare, except by report; and he was conscious of being practically much better than either of these persons—morally, infinitely their superior.

“Very trivial reading indeed,” he said, scornfully.

Had she told him that the boy had been reading the *Materia Medica*, he would have called that study; but the idea of applying the word study to such ephemeral works as those of Burns and Shakespeare!

“His stomach is disordered—he only needs a powder,” concluded the doctor decisively.

The powder was compounded, the boy never took it, and he recovered!

By-and-by came the important change from home to the university, and the decision as to a profession. The Laird had certain ideas.

about minerals, and therefore wished Walter to become an engineer. Walter was delighted with the idea, and for a while devoted himself arduously to physics and mechanical science. But, slowly at first, and then rapidly, there took place a transformation in the character of the youth—it was really a development—and to the surprise of everybody he determined to enter the ministry. He had been always regarded as such a light feather of a youth, stirred and influenced by every wind that blew, that it was difficult for those who knew him to imagine him capable of fulfilling the grave duties of a parish minister.

The Laird was angry : all the more so that his neighbours, like himself, were quite satisfied that Walter was unfitted for the services and responsibilities he was so boldly and recklessly, not to say presumptuously, about to undertake.

It was not the responsibility which affected the Laird, but the destruction of a long-cherished scheme.

Walter, however, was resolute, and so he

applied himself to the study of theology—still keeping up his acquaintance with Burns and Shakespeare. He was full of enthusiastic aspirations, but was curiously unconscious of his own growth. He never thought of himself as a man, and he paid a kind of boyish respect to his seniors. He sometimes had visions of marriage, a happy home in some quiet manse near the sea, and great work to be done in helping others ; but that was such a long way off in the future that the visions were very dim. So it was that he was very slow to realize the fact that Teenie had become a woman. But a word was spoken—“Some smart lad will carry her off before long,” said one of his college friends in the course of a summer day’s ramble—and Walter awakened from a dream. He felt shy, and amused with himself ; he felt awkward, and puzzled with himself.

Teenie went blithely to the door, and threw it open.

"I knew you would come," she said, looking up with her clear frank eyes into the face of the man.

He was a tall fellow, dressed in gray tweed. The welcome pleased him, and with the smiling curiosity of one who is amused by the drollery of a child, he asked—

"And how did you know I would come, Teenie?"

"Because I dreamed I you were sailing away out on the sea, never to come back, and dreams go by contraries!"

"Were you frightened when you saw me sailing away?"

"No; what would I be frightened for?—Hoosh, cat!—she's always trying to worry the doos."

Teenie threw a stone at a large tortoise-shell cat, which had been patiently watching an opportunity to pounce upon one of the pigeons.

"Frightened that I might not return," he said, continuing the conversation.

“ Oh, but I knew you would come back.”

“ You would trust me then, no matter what others might say ?”

“ I suppose so,” she answered, somewhat carelessly, for she did not observe the seriousness of his tone.

“ But if I did not come back, you would be sorry ?”

“ I dare say I would, for a while at any rate.”

“ Only for a while !” he cried, making a wry face.

“ Yes ; what more ?—did you not tell me that we would be awful miserable creatures if we could not forget ?”

“ So we would ; but for all that I would not like you to forget me, for that would be a sign you did not care much for me.”

“ Oh, but I do care a great deal for you.”

“ More than for anybody else ?”

“ I cannot say that ” (thoughtfully).

With a mock tragical air, he said—

“ Would you die for me ?”

“I am quite sure I would not,” she answered with disagreeable frankness.

“What !” he exclaimed, laughing, “if you saw me in the bay there, and the waves dashing me about like a shuttlecock, and heard me crying, ‘Teenie, Teenie, come, or I’ll be drowned!’—wouldn’t you try to save me?”

“To be sure I would, and I would do the same for any other poor creature in such a pass.”

Although he had been speaking apparently in jest, he did not quite enjoy the answer. Only a little while ago she had been questioning the future about her relations with this man ; and yet here she was speaking as if she cared no more for him than for anybody else ! But she had neither desire nor intention to deceive him. She had a child’s reckless way of uttering the thought which happened to be uppermost, without the least speculation as to the effect her words might produce on the hearer. She saw that he was not satisfied.

“Why do you ask me these questions,” she said, “if you do not like me to answer them?”

“But I do like you to answer them, only—in another way. Let us go down to the bay, and I’ll tell you a story.”

“Yes, and I’ll tell you the ploy I had with Ailie this morning.—I’ll be back in a while, Ailie,” she added, thrusting her head in at the door.

Then she darted off after Walter, who was walking towards the path which led down the face of the rock to the bay. She passed him, and sprang down the steep path; he followed quickly, and yet was far behind her. She seemed to bound along with the buoyancy and brightness of a wavelet upon which the sun is flashing. He watched her, admiration and a kind of wonder in his eyes.

She stood on the yellow sand, throwing back her long hair, as the wind tossed it on her face and round her neck—looking up and laughing at the laggard. What could he

make of this bright creature?—at one moment she was such a child in thought and desire, and in the next, a woman of prompt word and action.

“Is it not fine?” she cried, pointing to the sea, her eyes reflecting its colours; “do you not hear the waters bamffling on the stones, and do you not see the bonnie tarns of silver and gold the sun is making out yonder? Oh, I would just like to be aye sailing, sailing on the bonnie water.”

“Ay, but there are storms and wrecks as well as sunshine, Teenie.”

“What a pity!” she said, her face darkening whilst she continued to gaze with vague questioning across the sea. “What’s at the other side—land, and folk something like ourselves?”

“Yes, and water again, and land; and if you went on far enough, you would just come back to where you started from.”

She laughed, and the cloud passed away from eyes and face.

“It’s scarcely worth while starting then.”

She seated herself on a large stone beside a boat which lay dry on the sand, smelling of tar and fish. Walter sat on the boat, and tiny waves rippled up to their feet, casting bits of sea-weed and specks of foam towards them. The brown rocks, with their many black clefts, rose up high around them; and the two seemed to be shut into a little world of their own, from which there was only one outlet—the big one, so easy to pass, opening upon the great sea, and its storms and wrecks as well as its sunshine.

CHAPTER V.

HIS STORY.



HE began, looking at her with the quiet smile of assurance which brightens the face of a lover who is certain of acceptance—

“Once upon a time——”

“Is it a fairy story?” she interrupted, whilst she proceeded to plait long strips of seaweed into true lovers’ knots.

“It will be just what you like to make it.”

“What I like to make it?” Her busy fingers paused, and she looked up at him with a curious expression of wonder and doubt. She was thinking of the Book of Fate, and speculating in what fashion its contradictory predictions were to be fulfilled. She resumed

her work with the brown wet weeds, singing low, as if to herself, a snatch from an old ballad—

“Syne she’s gar’d build a bonnie boat,
To sail the salt salt sea ;
The sails were of the light-green silk,
The tows [ropes] of taffety.”

“ You’re a droll lass. What put that song in your head just now ?”

“ Thinking about your story, I suppose, and how I’m to make it what I like.”

“ You’ll see. Well, once upon a time there was a loon—suppose we give him my name, just for fun—and there was a lass——”

The plaiting of the seaweed ceased again, but she did not look up.

“ Suppose we give the lass my cousin’s name—Grace.”

Teenie’s fingers worked more rapidly than ever ; one might have fancied there was even a degree of spite in their energy.

“ The loon was very fond of Grace,” he went on, “ and she liked him ; at any rate

she often helped him out of the scrapes he blundered into. So one day Wat's father says to him, 'There, sir, when you are old enough you shall marry her. She is a fine lass, and she has a fine bit of land that will be worth a ransom when the coal and iron are worked, but keep your thumb on that. Be kind to her, and see that she does not slip through your fingers; for let me tell you that beyond your education you have nothing to get from me.'"

"And what did the loon say to that?"

"Nothing. He did not know what he could say; but he laughed to himself at the notion of his own marriage; for *then* it seemed to be only a funny notion. So the affair came to be looked upon by all his friends as quite settled, and they thought the arrangement a lucky one for him. But by-and-by Wat began to feel that he had got into another scrape, for one fine morning he came to look seriously into himself, and he discovered that if ever he

married the woman who had all his heart, Grace would not be his wife."

Teenie plaited and sang another snatch of the ballad—

"She sailed it round, and sailed it round,
And loud, loud cried she—
'Now break, now break, ye fairy charms,
And set my true love free.'"

He rested his elbow on his knee, and his chin on his hand, thus bringing his face down close to hers.

"What was he to do then?" he said, earnestly. "He was, in a way, bound to Grace, and yet he could not marry her without doing her a grievous wrong, besides laying up for himself a future of discontent and regret; and maybe the woman he loved would also be a sufferer. He would have done a great deal to save either of those lassies from pain, but it seemed as if injury to one or both must follow, whichever way he turned."

"Was he not himself to blame for it all?" she said, almost wickedly.

“He was, and he did not spare himself. The circumstances caused him many weary nights and troubled days. What made his position the more painful was, that he had quite recently undertaken the solemn responsibilities of a minister—undertaken to teach duty to others—and here he was doubting about his own on the very threshold of his work. What was he to do ?

“Maybe he went to Grace and asked her,” she said, so quietly that the gentle plash of the water on the sand at their feet almost drowned her voice.

But Walter heard, and he was glad to hear.

“He did so ; and he went to her, determined to submit to her decision, whatever it might be. She had helped him in many difficulties before, and he knew that she would help him to do what was right in this one.”

“She must be very good. I would not like a man to come to me on such an errand.”

“Aye, Teenie, she is good.” His hand

dropped on hers, his eyes glowing with enthusiasm, and he forgot the imaginary character in whose name he had thus far spoken. "On my way to her house I formed all sorts of plans for telling her my purpose gently. In this way I would ask her forgiveness, in that way I would try to explain how bitter had been the struggle with myself before I had dared to take this step. But my plans were useless. After the first bungling word she seemed to understand everything. 'Don't speak, Walter. Wait,' she said; and I stood there, dumb. I felt so contemptible in my own eyes, as well as in hers."

Teenie began to tear her true lovers' knots of seaweed into shreds, and to drop them on the sand.

His face looked cold and white; he went on, with a kind of subdued pain in his voice and manner—

"She turned away from me, but I knew the beauty of the face which was hidden from me, or rather the beauty of the soul which it re-

flects, and I remembered her affliction. It seemed as if my duty only became clear to me at that moment ; it was to be faithful and helpful to her—to put away as best I could the cravings of my own heart, and to try to make her life happy. Was not that right ?”

“ I dare say” (slowly, and as if she were speaking whilst her thoughts were occupied with other matters).

“ I am glad you think so,” he said, eagerly, as if she had given the fullest assent to his question, “ and I tried to tell Grace that. But she came quietly up to me and put her hands on my shoulders, just as she used to do when I had made some blunder at home, and she persuaded me to acknowledge my fault and promise to be good.

“ ‘ Thank you, Walter,’ she said ; ‘ I am very happy in feeling that you love me well enough to think of making the sacrifice you propose. But you would be foolish and wrong to make it ; I would be still more foolish to accept it. You have been brave

and right to come and tell me this, and I thank you for that too. But I have long expected it. Don't trouble yourself about me. I am glad that this happens before our marriage instead of after. Oh, I have often thought of the possibility of your meeting somebody younger, brighter than myself, and I am glad that it happens now. Go to her; tell her that she shall have no truer or fonder friend than me. And, to relieve you from all doubt in the matter, let me tell you as I shall tell the Laird to-morrow—I will not marry you, Walter Burnett, whatever may happen.'

"I argued very earnestly that it was my wish to do whatever would make her happy. Then she bade me go and do as she had told me. I left her, not satisfied with myself, you may be sure, but feeling that she was right, as she always is, and that if she had yielded to my entreaties we would have both repented when too late.—What is the matter, Teenie?"

Teenie was bending forward, dropping the

last fragments of seaweed on the sand, and apparently listening to the melancholy murmur of the water. She looked as if she would cry, but there were no tears in her eyes.

“What is the matter?” he repeated, resting his hand tenderly on her shoulder. “Do you not understand the story?”

“Oh, aye, I know very well. I wish I could be like Grace Wishart, but I cannot. She is good—you should have her.”

“No, I want you to be my wife, Teenie, and I came to ask you. Will you say yes?”

She was looking anxiously seaward, as if seeking something she could not find. She answered in the same disjointed manner as before—

“I cannot tell what to say—there is nobody I ever thought about that way but you; there is nobody but you I would ever have, and I would like to say yes, but——”

“But what?” (very much surprised at the pause after such frank admissions).

“Ailie and me were reading my fortune to-

day—that was the ploy I was to tell you about—and the bookie said that there would be troubles in our marriage. That's the 'but.'”

He was vexed, but the vexation gave way to laughter when she turned her bonnie face up to him, and he saw that she was seriously disturbed.

“What nonsense! and what a silly little lady you are sometimes! You shall say yes!”

“Aye, if——”

He stopped the objection with a kiss, and then he glanced hurriedly upward and round to see if they were observed. Feeling satisfied that they were safe, he seized both her hands, lifted her up, and they began to walk along the sand.

“‘If’ is a detestable word, Teenie, and you must not use it again. ‘If’ is a will o’ the wisp, deceitful, misleading, and destructive of all moral courage and all hope. The man who fails cries, *if* so-and-so had happened he

would have been all right. But the brave man and the brave woman cast the word from them, set teeth hard, and try again. You must give up 'ifs,' Teenie, as well as fortune-telling."

It was to him the moment of supreme bliss which comes only once in a lifetime—the moment in which the first enthusiastic love of a young heart is declared and accepted. He was ready to prattle about anything, and to laugh at anything—great joy is a brief relapse into childhood. And how beautiful all the world appeared to him then! There was not an ugly thing on the earth. The brown rocks, here darkening and there glowing in the afternoon light, the great sea with its many shades and restless spirit, had never seemed so glorious to him before. He had forgotten all about the storms and shipwrecks: he felt only the sunshine.

She was very quiet; indeed she was a good deal bewildered. She could not realize her own position or his: she submitted to

him rather than joined in his ecstasies. She wanted to be his wife; and yet, now that the matter was settled, she did not experience the wild delight she had felt in the anticipation of that event. Perhaps it was the story about Grace Wishart which combined with her fortune-telling exploit to cast a shadow on her pleasure. She did not know, and she could not, even if she had been so minded, seek far for the reason just then, whilst he, with his grand enthusiasm, was speaking to her. She just knew that she somehow shrank under the great love that he seemed to give her, feeling herself to be unworthy of such a passion.

She did not think of trying to tell him that; she only felt that she loved him more and more, as she became conscious of her own unworthiness.

He was talking to her about their future. It was not to be a grand one; they were to begin with very humble means, and he was anxious to explain everything to her, so that

there might be no misunderstanding afterwards.

Although he was the Laird's son, he would have nothing but his own efforts to depend upon ; for the Laird's family was large, and his estate now small. Walter had been provided for by an education to his own mind, and a rich wife if he had been willing to accept her. He had rejected the fortune, and all that he could hope for from his father, now, was his consent to a marriage which—it must not be concealed—a second time frustrated his plans for Walter.

But Walter was more than content that everything should go to his brothers and sisters ; he was happy so long as he had Teenie. (Teenie just pressed his hand at that, and looked up at him smiling.) He was rewarded. He desired nothing, and he needed nothing, but her love ; and since he had that, all the world might go “ tapsalteerie ” for him. But he had not been rash ; he had thought of her comfort ; and before speaking, he had ob-

tained the appointment of assistant and successor—if he chose to remain long enough—to the old minister of Drumliemount, at the annual stipend of one hundred pounds! They could manage with that—could they not? (Oh, yes, she supposed so.) Other folk managed with less, and he meant to set an example of thrift, and simple life, as one of the lessons his office called upon him to teach. But, besides that income, he intended to write for the magazines, and in many ways he hoped—mind you, he only hoped—to make perhaps another hundred a-year, upon which they could live comfortably in that out-of-the-way place, and help their neighbours.

And that was the great point: he had adopted his profession because he felt the possibility of helping others in it. He had seen in the cities, and in country places, much sin and suffering, and he believed they could be greatly softened by active religion—he did not attempt to explain what he meant

by *active* religion—and he expected Teenie to second him in all his efforts to accomplish the great work that he saw before him.

Teenie did not understand a word of his enthusiastic aspirations, and she was wondering what it was all about, whilst she promised to help him with all her might—and meant what she said.

“But there’s a boat,” she added hastily, withdrawing her hand from his; for so, hand-in hand, they had paced the narrow beach, whilst he had been pouring out his hopes.

Walter looked up as if wakened from a dream; he had been so much absorbed in talking to Teenie, that the whole fleet of England might have passed him unobserved.


The boat, with its brown sail full, had quietly rounded the headland, and, guided by the cunning hand of Dan Thorston, it slipped into the bay, the slanting rays of the sun giving it light and shade, and life. The sail flapped—dropped; the boat grated on the sand—rolled to one side; Thorston and

one of his two men leapt into the water, caught the impetus of the boat and lugged it higher up on the beach. Then there was bustle, and many orders to give about the sails, the nets, the landing of the fish, and the securing of the boat, all which Thorston gave in a quiet hard voice, before he condescended to observe the presence of his daughter and young Dalmahoy. But he had seen her as soon as the boat turned the point; and so had Ellick Limpitlaw—his chief assistant, and one of the many young fishers who had cast longing eyes at Dan Thorston's daughter.

As soon as the boat touched the sand, Teenie ran to it, and gave her help in all the work that was going forward, with a glee that was a curious contrast to her passiveness under the enthusiastic outpourings of the man she loved.

CHAPTER VI.

SKIPPER DAN.

“AD a good shot?” said Walter, pretending to be quite at his ease, and to be deeply interested in the skipper’s excursion.

“There’s nae mair fish in the sea, I think,” answered Dan, but the complaint was made in such a quiet way that you could not discover the least spleen. “We might almost as well draw our nets through the sheughs [gutters] of Kingshaven, and we’d be mair like to get profit there. I’m thinking Peter’s ships maun ha’e been less nor ordinar’ or his fish maun ha’e been young whales to sink them wi’ what his nets could hold. My boat would na’ sink if the fishes were

sliding ower the gunwale, and it's no bigger than its neighbours."

Thorston was never known to admit that he had made a good haul or "shot."

"Better luck next time, skipper."

"Ou aye, that's fine consolation for them that doesna need to care about succeeding *this* time. But it's poor kitchen [sauce] to a man's porridge to tell him he'll ha'e milk next week. Hows'ever, we maunna complain; and let them grumble who likes 't."

And Dan set himself to direct the disposition of his cargo, as if he had been the most contented man in the world. In all that he did Teenie not only helped him with willing and skilful hands, but sometimes guided his arrangements; and he, when unobserved, submitted to her dictation in the humblest way, and with the most implicit obedience; but if he fancied anybody saw them he acted in direct opposition to her advice, even when that advice suggested the very thing he had been intending to do.

It was observable, on the present occasion, that a frown remained on his brow, as if something had gone wrong about which he was not willing to speak ; and he seemed shy of coming near Walter, adopting all sorts of petty subterfuges to get out of his way.

The fact was that, as they turned the point, Limpitlaw had said to him—

“Do you see yon?”

“See what?” said Thorston, seeing all the time to what his comrade referred, and not liking it, although he did not know why.

“Your daughter and young Dalmahoy. If you dinna see, other folk speak, and it’s no for her good that they should be so muckle thegither.”

“Hold your tongue—confound you, if you speak another word like that I’ll put your head aneath the water!”

Limpitlaw grumbled to himself, but did not attempt to interfere further.

Whether it was due to the man’s suggestion, or to the appearance of Teenie and her

lover in such a solitary place, Dan Thorston was troubled. He had been so much accustomed to look upon his daughter and Walter as mere bairns, that he had never, until this moment, suspected danger to either from their intimacy. He did not see even now that there was anything to make a fuss about; and he did not know why folk should talk about his lass, except that they were idle de'ils amusing themselves by casting hot cinders into honest neighbours' porridge.

Yet he was troubled; a word and a glance seemed to have roused him to a sense of quicksands and whirlpools under his feet, where hitherto he had been most unsuspecting of peril. He felt discontented with the land, and everything upon it.

There was a general sense of thunder in the air. Teenie was bright and active as ever, speaking to the men with a familiarity that annoyed Walter, laughing at their jokes, and apparently taking the liveliest interest in

all their movements; but there was an element of defiance in her activity. Limpitlaw was dour and slow. Walter spoke a kindly word to him, and received a sullen "thank ye" for his pains, which was more like a sign of wrath than of gratitude.

Walter felt that he had suddenly dropped from the clouds of joy down to a state of awkwardness and shyness which were almost unbearable. He found himself continually in the way of everybody, and once when he tried to give a helping hand, the result seemed to be more trouble than assistance to the others. When he tried to lift, unaided, a creel full of fish, he staggered, the basket capsized, and the slippery freight rolled out upon the sand. Teenie actually laughed at him, and Limpitlaw, as he slowly set about repairing the disaster, grinned in such a way that Walter thought it would have been a relief to kick him.

They straggled up the path, Teenie first, then Limpitlaw carrying the creel upon his

shoulders. Thorston followed with a bundle of nets he purposed mending. To him young Dalmahoy kept close, trying to maintain a conversation, which he found unusually difficult—partly, as he thought, owing to the dry answers of Dan. On the headland Teenie darted into the house, followed slowly by Limpitlaw with his creel.

Thorston halted, looking down the abyss, and Walter stood beside him. The latter spoke, wondering all the time how he was to approach the subject which was uppermost in his thoughts.

“It’s an ugly place for a fall.”

“Ay, I’m thinking there wouldna be many whole bones left if you had a coup down yonder.”

“It’s a wonder to me how Teenie and I managed to escape tumbling over these cliffs, when we used to be romping about here as if there was no danger and nothing to fear. You should have put up a fence, skipper.”

There was a symbolical meaning in his words of which he was quite unconscious.

“What good would that have done, think ye?” said Dan dryly. “Fences are just made to be broken, in my opinion. When there’s nae fence you take care of yourself; but when there is a fence, folk and bairns are just tempted to try the strength of it, and so bring about the mischief the fence was intended to prevent.”

Walter again found himself wondering what he should say next, because he wanted to say one thing and was trying to say another. Sensibly, he determined to say the one thing.

“Thorston, I want to speak to you upon a subject which may surprise you, and somehow I can’t get the words out.”

“Say awa.”

“I want to marry Teenie.”

Walter felt as though he could breathe now. But Dan did not look in the least

surprised ; he began quietly to deposit his nets on the ground, and only said—

“ Do you ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And what does she say ? ”

“ She agrees.”

“ Ay, and how long is it since you thought about this ? ”

“ I cannot tell, but it’s a good while ; and I only waited till I should be placed ” (obtain a kirk) “ somewhere, to speak. You’ll not stand in the way of what will bring happiness to us both ? ”

Dan looked very sternly at the nets, as if they had been doing something wrong ; he slowly passed one through his hands, searching for holes. That done, he dropped the net on the pile at his feet. All the time Walter was in suspense to learn his decision. But instead of declaring for or against the proposal, he wheeled about to the road, saying—

“ Come on.”

"Come where?" exclaimed Walter, observing that Dan's steps were not directed towards the cottage.

"To Dalmahoy; I want to hear what the Laird has to say on the matter."

Walter was disturbed by this abrupt manner of dealing with his question, particularly as he was anxious that his father should hear Grace Wishart before his desire to marry Teenie should be made known to him. Besides he would have liked an opportunity to speak himself to the Laird.

"Stop a minute," he said hurriedly, "I have not yet told anything of this to my father."

"All the better," interrupted Dan, "I'll tell him. Come on."

And the skipper looked hard at him, as if he were saying, "If you are honest, what do you fear?"

"I fear nothing more than that you may stir up unnecessary disagreement," would have been Walter's answer to the look, but

he replied only to the words, "As you please," and walked on beside him.

Young Dalmahoy had this peculiarity, that whenever he had anything disagreeable to communicate to any one, he liked to do it himself, and face to face. He knew that it would be very unpleasant to his father to learn that he had again determined to alter the plans which had been laid down for his future. He expected there would be a very sharp discussion, if not a decided quarrel; and the presence of Dan Thorston would add considerably to the difficulty he would have in explaining everything to his father—for the latter was very likely to speak words which would be offensive to the skipper. What might be the consequences, formed a most uncomfortable speculation.

As for Dan, he marched along with features as grimly set as if he had been on the deck of a vessel in the midst of a wild storm. The whole event had come upon him somewhat suddenly, and he was not yet

certain how he ought to act, further than that the first thing to be done was to learn what the Laird's views were upon the subject. It never occurred to him to question Teenie's fitness to become the wife of the Laird's son ; in his eyes Teenie was fit to command the Channel fleet. But he had a shrewd notion that other people might not be quite so well satisfied on that point. That rather confused him.

Teenie had been to him, from babyhood almost, a companion, which was an unusual position for the child of a Scotch parent to occupy. She had never known what it was to stand in awe of him, or to wish to get out of the way on seeing him approach. She had been much with him, in the bay, in the boats, and at sea. He was a man of great muscle, and yet the child could lead him in whatever direction she pleased—always provided no third person observed them. He was never known to yield in the least to the counsels or prayers of anybody he had deal-

ings with. He was called "thrawart" (stubborn) at first, but by-and-by, as success attended him, he was called a man of firm will. Teenie only laughed, or moved her little finger, and he submitted, and in that submission he seemed to find his greatest happiness.

"She's a witch," he would mutter, watching her bright movements, and wondering at himself, while he chuckled over some new weakness of which he had just been guilty, "and can do what she likes with me. But it pleases her and does me nae harm," he would add for his own consolation.

Suddenly there comes a man and requires him to surrender his treasure, telling him that she too wishes it ! It was not easy for him to decide how to act. The narrow life he had lived had been brightened by few pleasures ; work had been everything to him ; but he remembered now—looking back through mists and stormy waters, through the good and bad fortune of the sea—how

the work had seemed easy to him, thinking of her, and how, in rough winds and darkness, the thought of her had been a light, cheering and comforting him—ay, and giving him courage. It was *not* easy to think of giving her to somebody else, and of acknowledging that he had no longer the first place in her thoughts.

But *she* wished it!—the old, gruff, weatherbeaten man felt something akin to jealousy of Burnett, who was beautiful in the mere possession of youth, and who had thus displaced him in Teenie's heart.

So he was silent and grim as he marched along, and Walter did not attempt to disturb him.

They had turned their backs upon Rowanden and the sea. Taking a short cut they passed through a plantation of tall firs. The clear soft light of the afternoon formed brilliant patches of silver beneath the trees, checkered by black shadows. Here the bole of a tree showed white like a woodland

nymph laughing as they passed; close by, another, black and gloomy, as it might be the evil genius of the wood. Hurrying along, it was like flashing glimpses of night and morning. The brown boggy earth yielded to their feet; rabbits scampered right and left at their approach; the birds were in full chorus, filling the wood with pleasant sounds, and occasionally a ferret spanned a branch like a streak of light.

They passed out upon the moor; the sunlight on the heather presented a waste of bright purple, interspersed with clumps of green fern, silver gleams of water, and black patches where the heather had been burnt. Two sportsmen were at work, and the report of their guns sounded in the distance like the crack of a popgun, whilst thin wreaths of blue smoke curled slowly upwards. They were having good sport evidently, for the dogs were busy leaping through the heather, with an occasional yelp; then back again to the master's side, silent, watchful of his eyes,

and ready to spring forward at the least sign.

Thorston and Walter reached a road which crossed the moor to the hills, and by-and-by they entered the gate of Dalmahoy. The grounds were not very extensive, but they were sufficiently so to make Dan thoughtful; and when he found himself in front of the big heavy house, with its many windows and pepperpot turrets, he had come to the consideration that it might be worth while parting with Teenie if, some day, she were to become the mistress of all this property. He did not understand how anybody owning all this could be poor.

They entered the house, and Walter led the way to a parlour. He inquired for his father. The Laird was in the drawing-room, engaged with some visitors. Walter told the servant to ask when Skipper Thorston could see him.

An old man, with a clean-shaven face wearing a mildly depressed expression—as if

he had been suffering martyrdom of some kind so long that he had got used to it—returned with the answer. This was Peter Drysdale, butler and general-in-chief under the Laird of Dalmahoy. He paid no attention to Walter, but addressed Dan as an old friend.

“How are you, skipper? The Laird’s thrang—’deed, I think a’ our relations from far and near have come to see us the-day. What for there’s nae telling; I’m sure they werena wanted, for the Laird was as muckle put out as mysel’, when he saw them coming that thick you could hardly count them. But the Laird, as soon as he kenned you was here, loupit up and said he would be wi’ you immediately. He was just glad o’ ony excuse to get awa from our friends.”

And apparently Drysdale’s surmise was correct, for presently the Laird walked into the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAIRD.



HE Laird of Dalmahoy was tall and large-boned ; his features large, except the nose, which was small and inclined upwards ; very few wrinkles, thin gray hair cut short, no hair on the face, and quick keen eyes. Dress neat—a great show of white shirt-front, about which he was particular. He was sixty, and would have passed for not more than fifty. In the morning he usually appeared in a dark brown tweed suit, the coat cut short as for a youth. He carried his head high, shoulders square, and was proud to believe that people still regarded him as quite young. He was pleased to be a radical by profession ; he was

an intense conservative in fact. He sat in Parliament for the county under several governments. He had promised great things; he had done nothing. On one occasion he had meditated a speech, when some county affairs engaged the attention of the House.

"Now or never is my opportunity," he whispered to an old friend who sat beside him.

"For heaven's sake, Hugh, let me out first," exclaimed his friend in a whisper, rising hurriedly to escape the spectacle of the Laird's humiliation.

That crushed the orator in the bud. He never spoke in the House; and soon afterwards—finding that he was not likely to be returned—he gracefully retired from his onerous position. He was fond, however, of letting off at local meetings, agricultural dinners, or flower shows, or even into the ears of individuals who were sure to listen to him, those fireworks of eloquence which had been intended to set the House in flames.

He liked to be regarded in the character

of an enthusiast ; he was constantly theorizing about the greatest happiness for the greatest number ; the minority must submit to be sacrificed to the majority. It was the nature of things ; we could see it in the animal, ay, and in the vegetable kingdom ; and the absolute necessity for an immediate recognition of the law in human affairs was apparent on every hand, in the contentions between class and class which never ceased.

He was perfectly sincere in his declamation and faith in his theory, but he never thought of himself being in the minority ; consequently he increased his rents whenever he found an opportunity, he preserved his game strictly, and he held his family in severe subjection, so that his theories and actions were not always in accord ; and his enthusiasm—a friend said—was uncommonly like a disguise for a selfish nature. But the Laird was innocent of all intentional hypocrisy. He believed thoroughly in himself and in the honesty of his every word and act.

“Have you come about that Methven business, too?” he said as he entered.

“What Methven business?” asked Dan, surprised.

“Oh!” This was a half-subdued note of astonishment and inquiry, and there was something in it which suggested that the Laird regretted he had spoken so hastily.

He raised his glasses—heavily mounted in gold—and glanced at an open letter in his hand. Then, as he dropped the glasses, he looked at the skipper curiously.

Walter was standing at the window, tapping the sill with his fingers, and gazing out on the lawn. He was puzzled by the readiness with which his father had come to see Dan Thorston, and more so by the question he had asked. Walter had at once associated the name Methven with the millionaire who died recently, and he could not imagine how that event could have anything to do with Dan.

“I care naething about the business you

“speak of, Laird,” said Dan in his dry way; “I came to speak about your son Walter.”

“About Walter?” exclaimed the Laird, evidently mystified; “has he been doing anything wrong?”

The son wheeled round and frankly met his father's eyes.

“We'll see about that. He wants to marry my daughter Teenie, and I want to ken what you have to say to it.”

“Wants to marry your daughter!” (taking a long breath and looking more astounded than displeased).

“Just that, and though I would as soon see her married to him as to anybody, she shall be wife to nae man whose friends will not make her welcome.”

“Quite right—very sensible,” muttered the Laird, evidently thinking about something else.

“Let me tell you, too,” proceeded Dan quietly, “this has taken me as muckle by

surprise as yoursel', and the minute I heard of it I came to you."

"Thank you, Thorston—I would have expected as much from you. Will you excuse me a minute?"

The Laird, with brows knit, again examined the letter he held, and then carefully placed it in a large morocco pocket-book; apparently he was satisfied upon some subject which had engaged his attention.

Walter all this time was watching him, his pulse beating fast with suspense.

The father slowly crossed the room to his son, and looking straight in his eyes, said in an undertone simply—

"Miss Wishart?"

"She knows;" and Walter felt his cheeks hot whilst his eyes sought the floor. During the last two or three minutes he had been faintly hoping that Grace had already explained.

The Laird bent his head and returned to Dan. Taking up his position on the hearth-

rug, one hand behind him, whilst the other played with his glasses and the silk cord by which they were suspended round his neck, he began graciously—

“Take a seat, Thorston, take a seat, please. You see the matter stands somewhat in this fashion. Walter is a fine fellow, he has an excellent head, but his ideas are apt to resemble a midges’ dance—they are rather confused. I measured his capacities, as a man of experience and some intellect can measure the capacities of a child constantly under his observation, and I had formed certain plans for him which I believe would have rendered his future one of ease and usefulness.

“As he grows up he thinks that he can form better plans for himself, and accordingly does so. As a father, I might have insisted upon obedience to my wishes; as a man of experience, I say, ‘Very well, since you are resolved upon your own course, take it, but absolve me from all blame if you fail.’”

The Laird paused as if for some sign of approbation of his wisdom and forbearance. But Walter could not speak, and Dan was silent, thinking what a gift of language the Laird had, and wondering when he would come to the subject in hand.

"I must own that I am disappointed," Dalmahoy went on; "I think he could have done better than he can do in the Church; I think he could have done better than marry your daughter."

Dan got up.

"Now, now! be patient, *if* you please," exclaimed the Laird, closing his eyes, averting his face, and motioning grandly with the glasses for his auditor to remain seated.

Thorston would not sit again, but he held his tongue, and the oracle proceeded—

"I did not intend the slightest disrespect to your daughter. I admire Christina extremely, and if I had been a younger man I have no doubt the feeling would have been still warmer. But you are aware that the

match is, in some respects, unequal—at least, I fear there are some old-fashioned people who will so regard it. Pardon me for saying this ; I only desire to place the whole matter plainly before you, in order that there may be no reflections upon me hereafter.”

“ I’m no asking a favour for Teenie,” said the skipper, gruffly, and preparing to go ; for as he understood the harangue, it meant a refusal of the young folks’ wishes. So Walter thought too.

“ No favour at all, Thorston ; understand me clearly ; I am only referring to what will be said by others. For myself, I admire her ; I admire your upright, straightforward character, and you know my principles. To me ‘an honest man *is* the noblest work of God,’ and the observation applies equally to women. Therefore——”

He paused, closing his eyes, and enjoying in imagination the round of applause which that sentence would have evoked at the annual meeting of the agricultural society.

He mentally noted it, to use on the first public opportunity.

“Therefore I give my free and willing consent to my son Walter to marry Christiana, and I shall take an early occasion to salute my daughter-in-law.”

Walter could scarcely believe his ears, and his throat was so full of happiness that he could not speak immediately. He hastily crossed the room and seized his father's hand, saying huskily—

“Thank you.”

“I did not expect this,” muttered Dan, as if he were inclined to be sorry; “hows'ever, I'm glad that it is so, since the lass wants it.”

“You are surprised,” said Dalmahoy, gratified by the impression he had made, “but you will observe that in consenting to this marriage I am only carrying out the principles which have guided my public life. It is long since I first raised my voice against class distinctions; and I am proud to find that the

growing power and intelligence of the working classes are compelling universal acceptance of my doctrines. I am proud to think, sir, that we are approaching the era when intellect alone shall distinguish one man from another." (Another sentence to remember for his first speech.)

"Nae doubt, nae doubt," muttered Dan, neither understanding nor caring about the Laird's principles; "I'll say good-day now."

"Before you go, Thorston, you understand, I hope, that Walter has nothing but his profession to depend upon at present; and even when my time comes he will have little more to expect than the house and a bit of land. I have a large family; we have no entail; and I mean to make my children equal as far as possible in what is left to them."

"You could not do better, sir; that's fair. Teenie will have some siller of her own. At any rate, she'll no bring her man an Inverness tocher."

Dan grinned at his little joke. According to one version of the saying, a man is supposed to get an Inverness tocher when he receives with his wife a mother-in-law, a sister-in-law, and a piano to keep.

The business being thus settled to everybody's satisfaction, as it seemed, and very much to the surprise of one of the persons interested, Thorston made his way home, taking a good look at the house and grounds as he passed out, although he had often seen both before. He was glad and sorry; he was eager to get home with his news, and yet inclined to loiter. He felt very queer; could not make it out; maybe it was some ailment coming on him. He could not tell, for he had never known sickness in his own person. He wished young Dalmahoy had been at Jericho, or that Teenie had been still a wee bairn, scampering about in short coats and bare legs.

Walter remained, and tried again to express his very warm gratitude to the Laird for thus

readily removing the only obstacle to his perfect happiness.

“ I hope you’ll find it perfect, Wattie,” said the father, smiling ; “ you’ll be the first man who ever did. Prove your gratitude to me ten years hence, by telling me that you do not blame me for what I have done now.”

“ I’ll do that !” cried the lover, eagerly.

“ Aye be sure of this—I thought it was for your good to say yes, or I would have said no, just as readily. How the devil you are to get on with Dan Thorston as your father-in-law I can’t see, unless you manage to bribe him to emigrate to the Cannibal Islands or the North Pole. A good idea ! Start an expedition to discover the North-west Passage, and make him captain. He’ll never come back. The captain never does.”

Walter laughed.

“ There will be no need for that ; everybody likes Dan, and he’s a fine honest fellow, as you yourself said.”

“ Yes, but I wasn’t going to be his son-in-

law. Honesty is admirable—in the abstract—but culture and manners are much more comfortable companions on a long journey.”

“I am content—more than content. I am very happy.”

“I dare say ; we all think that in the first heat of life. Oh, I know what the glamour of Love’s young dream is, and upon my soul I don’t think I would have opposed your wishes very savagely, even if there had not been good reasons known to myself for yielding to them. But, my lad, if you want to succeed in life, doubt everything and everybody except yourself. Remember that, and success is sure.”

“You say that,” said Walter—awkwardly, for he could not preach to his father—“and yet, has your life been all that you would have desired it to be ?”

The Laird winced ; his brow contracted, and he looked hard at the window. His memory flashed over the past, and he saw many hopes baffled, many aspirations thwarted,

many fine calculations upset, and many desires never gratified.

“No,” he said, blowing his nose to conceal something like a sigh, for the retrospect was not a pleasant one—as whose is? He saw so much that might have been accomplished if only this or that had happened, and so much had been accomplished that might have been left alone—“No; my life has been a failure. But I did not start with the experience which I offer to you.”

“Don’t you think, sir, that every man must work out his own experience?”

“It may be so, but there is so much wisdom in the experience of our fathers, that we would be happier if we would only be content to walk in their old-fashioned ways instead of striving after fantastic novelties in business, politics, and art. I have heard Whately say that the proverb ‘Experience teaches fools’ is a lie, for he is a wise man who profits by his own experience, a wiser still who profits by the experience of others; but a fool profits

neither by his own or others' experience. We shall see by-and-by in which category you stand."

"I hope it may not be the last."

"But it is the most probable place for you. Now go and amuse our friends until I join you. They are quite interesting. You will find them smiling on one side the face, and grinning in bitterness and spite on the other. This Methven property seems to have set the whole county by the ears."

Walter being unspeakably happy, and utterly indifferent to the Methven property, could afford to make a smiling effort to mollify the rancour of his cousins, uncles, and aunts, although he would have much preferred walking off to Teenie at once.

The Laird retired to his private room, a small corner apartment, where he was rarely interrupted. Two sides of the chamber were covered with books, many of them Parliamentary folios, now seldom disturbed.

He sat down in his easy chair in front of

his writing-table, and took out the letter which had occupied so much of his attention during the early part of his interview with Dan Thorston and Walter. He read it again, as if to reassure himself as to the nature of the contents.

“GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH.

“SIR,

“We have made the necessary investigation into the affairs of the late George Methven, some time of Rowanden and Kingshaven, and latterly of Manchester. The result of that investigation is as follows :—

“The said George Methven being a natural son, and dying without a will, the whole of his estate passes to the Crown; but the nearest of kin on the mother’s side may petition Her Majesty, through the Queen’s and Lord Treasurer’s Remembrancer of Exchequer, for a gift of the estate. As a rule this prayer is granted, subject to certain fees.

“We may mention that the members of the father’s family are, in such a case as the present, devoid of right or power to make a claim, the members of the mother’s family only being considered.

“So far as we have been able to discover, the nearest existing relative to the late George Methven is one Christina Thorston, daughter of Daniel Thorston, fisherman, now or recently residing at Rowanden. Daniel Thorston espoused a sister of George Methven’s mother, and Christina Thorston is therefore full cousin of the deceased, and, according to our present belief, his direct heir. We believe that by prompt and decisive action she might obtain the whole or greater part of the estate, subject to the usual fees.

“We shall be happy to attend to any further instructions with which you may favour us, and, meanwhile,

“We are, Sir,

“Your most humble and obedient Servants,

“PATTERSON AND GREIG, W.S.”

"It is the most remarkable event in my experience," said the Laird to himself, a glow of satisfaction suffusing his countenance. "To think of that youth Wattie stumbling blindfold into a million, and I, who have assiduously courted fortune all my life, never knew what it was to be out of difficulty. But I never had the same chance; and Wattie won't forget his poor father when he is rich."

He wrote an answer to the lawyer's letter, and then locked it up in his strong box.

"We must keep this quiet until our arrangements are completed; it would be a shame to disturb the contented minds of the girl and her father until I am quite sure of her claim. Now I can go and condole with our friends, and advise them not to be fools—if they can help it."

So, having arranged his plans—of which Walter was to know nothing either, for he was such a droll that he would reveal everything at once to Thorston—the Laird pro-

ceeded to join the ladies and gentlemen in the drawing-room, who were busy disputing their respective titles to the wealth of the dead man whom, living, they had snubbed and shunned.

CHAPTER VIII.

“GOING TO BE MARRIED.”



EXT morning, Dan was out on the headland before daybreak. It was a calm morning, only a ripple upon the water, whilst the bay was like a sheet of glass. There was just a mysterious breathing of the atmosphere which mingled with the soft pulsations of the sea. The slightest sound was heard with singular distinctness. He saw the sun creep slowly up the horizon, darting many golden bars athwart the quivering breast of the sea.

The stillness was pathetic; presently it was broken by the mellow chant of some fishermen singing in the distance, and looking round the point he saw the fishing fleet,

in a straggling line, with brown sails flapping lazily in the gentle breeze, stealing slowly towards the haven. Then came the indistinct cur-rr-eck of grouse, the screech of the heron on the rocks, the croak of gulls floating over the water, and the sharp twitter of lapwings as they rose in flight. The soft spiritual light of the morning, the waters flashing with all the colours of the rainbow, and the fishers' song combined to soothe Dan into a more contented mood than he had known since yesterday.

If the fishers of Rowanden had watched the skipper this morning not one of them would have expected luck to the nets, for his hand was often up at his brow, as he peered into space—farther than usual, for he was trying to see the future when there would be a solitary old man and a desolate cottage on the Norlan'. He stalked about with uncertain, dissatisfied steps. Then he would halt a long while in one place, calling himself hard names for not being proud and pleased as

Teenie was when he told her of his expedition, and the result.

She clapped her hands and cried, “That’s fine!” And old Ailie chimed in with “It’s grand news; I aye said Teenie was born to be a lady.” But neither thought of asking what he had to say.

He became dour, and would not speak.

Teenie saw this, and bade Ailie “whisht,” subduing her own expressions of pleasure at the same time. After supper—Dan’s appetite was still excellent—she made him a big tumblerful of steaming toddy, and he felt better. She got out the cards; they played, he won, and felt better still. The dark grim face of the man, the bright fair face of the girl bent over the table, and the feeble light of the oil-lamp flickered upon them, showing an expression of eagerness on the one, and simple joy on the other.

Ailie sat in the corner knitting, and retailing all the gossip she had picked up in the course of her morning’s excursion. Buckie

Ker's boat got adrift, and was found "dung a' to bits" on the rocks; Shauchlin (Shuffling) Sandy's wife was laid up with very bad fever; Hirpling Jamie had quarrelled with the fish-dealer about the number of crans of herring they had got in the last "shot;" Louping Bob had got into trouble with the water-bailies, and his wife had been drinking "sare;" and so on, giving to each person mentioned the distinguishing to-name or nick-name, which was generally suggestive of some physical characteristic or ability. All this amused the skipper whilst his attention was fixed on the game.

Then Teenie sang to him her favourite ballad, the "Lass of Lochryan," and, after, "Willie's drowned in Gamery." Her sweet voice made the plaintive story of the weary wanderings across the sea of fair Annie of Lochryan a real event to Dan, and he spoke of the heroine's fate as if he had known and loved her. The gloomy legend of the two lovers drowned in Gamery filled him with

anger at the hard-hearted parent whose curse had been the cause of the trouble.

Dan went to bed happy; Teenie went to bed full of confused thoughts and visions. She was changed somehow, and all the world was changed. She was not the same Teenie who had been feeding the doos, threatening the cat, and studying the Book of Fate, half in fun and half in earnest, early that day. She was going to be married! It was all settled, and she was thrilling with the strange exaltation, pleasure, and wonder which a girl experiences in the first few hours after her lover has spoken, and she has pledged herself to him. She could not possibly sleep this night, with that minister with the invisible head, the misty crowd of people, the beautiful bride's cake—which she had seen a few days ago in the confectioner's window at Kings-haven—the old shoes, and the yellow carriage with the two white horses from the King's Arms, all dancing wild reels at the foot of the bed. There she was, in the carriage now,

Walter beside her—the horses going off at a gallop down the brae, driving into the great mystery of the future.

She closes her eyes, covers her head with the clothes, and tries to shut it all out. But that is worse than ever. She gets up, goes to the window, and looks out. The sky is pale, and mottled with slow-moving clouds; the sea is rolling inward from the darkness, and breaking with long measured sweeps upon the rocks; the lights of the White Tower, high up in the air, are glinting their warning across the waters; below are the black spots which she knows to be the fishing-boats, and Rowanden looks like a black irregular mass of rocks pressing back from the shore. She felt calmer, looking out at these things, listening to the sea, and the eerie sough of the wind.

Stepping back from the window she moved a chair, and presently there was a tap on the wooden partition which separated her bed

from Ailie's in the next room. The sharp voice of the old woman cried—

"Goodness be here ! lassie, ha'e you got the dwams, or what, that you're no bedded ? There'll be nae word o' this in the morning" (meaning that she would be sorry for missing her rest).

That had more effect than anything else in composing Teenie's mind. She crept back to bed, surrendered herself to the exciting visions which she could not control, and by-and-by she slept.

The very happiness of the evening made Dan's waking thoughts the sadder, so he was up and out early. He ought to be proud of the position his lass was to fill ; and he was proud in a manner, for all Rowanden would be " in a way" about it, and he would be looked up to more than ever. But he would have been quite contented if things could have gone on in the old way ; and he had an uneasy suspicion that things would not be so comfortable either for Teenie or himself in

the new way. There was the boat she had so often sailed with him ; there were the nets her nimble fingers had so often helped him to mend ; there was the hut which she had helped him to build—by carrying the nails for him in her “daidly” (pinafore). He did not see how he was to get on without her at all. Only she wished it—and that was the one unanswerable argument.

“I’ll awa’ to Greenland with the next whaler,” he muttered, “and just think that she’s waiting for me at home here as in the auld times.”

A hand touched his arm, and he found Teenie beside him, looking as bright and fresh as if she had known no unrest during the night. She was a part of the morning, with her thick fair hair, her grand blue eyes, and sweet face.

“Weel?” said Dan, delighted by her presence, but not displaying the least sign of pleasure—“You’re early afoot.”

“You’ll no guess what I’ve been think-

ing?" she replied, looking at him with such a cunning smile.

"No; what might that be?"

"I'm no to marry Wattie Burnett!"

"What?" and he stared at her to see if she were quite herself.

Lips close, and expression serious; she nodded her head emphatically.

"Toots! you're raving, lassie, or you're trying to make fun of me. You maun marry him."

And Dan exhausted all his arguments to show her how there was no escape from the compact now that it was made. He discovered ever so many reasons, of which he had not thought before, for considering the marriage in every way a fortunate and desirable one. At that she smiled, and said with wonderful resignation—

"Very well, father, since you say I must, I will."

He felt hurt, for he saw that she had been laughing at him all the time; and he was re-

lapsing into dourness, but she placed her hand on his shoulder and said, quite earnestly this time—

“ But I would not have him if you said no, father—no, though he was king of England, and not another man for me in the world.”

It mollified him to hear her say so, and from that moment Thorston appeared to be the proudest and the most contented man in the world; whatever his secret thoughts or feelings might be, he looked always satisfied. It was a clever trick of hers, if it were only a trick.

Soon after breakfast Walter drove up in a gig, leapt down, and called for Teenie. He took both her hands; the man's eyes were full of the love that was in his heart. Teenie smiled, and for the first time felt shy with him.

“ You know that it's all right? The Laird never said a word against our wishes, but was as kind as if I had just done what he wanted.”

"Father told us last night—the Laird is very good."

"I wanted to come down myself last night, but I was kept late at the house—I must tell you the fun we had another time—and then I went over to Craighburn."

"To Miss Wishart—'deed and you might have come here instead," cried Teenie, laughing, and pretending to be offended.

"I could not help that—it was due to her who has been so good to me. But get on your things ; I've brought the gig, and I want you to go with me for a drive."

She was not quite prepared for that ; it would be the first time they had driven out together, and it would be like an open declaration to all the country of their new relationship. However, he insisted, and she was not obstinate. So she went to her room to prepare for the journey—an operation simple enough and speedily effected, for it chiefly consisted of removing her apron, and putting on a straw hat and a shawl.

As Dan saw them drive off he began to feel really proud and contented. Ailie was at his elbow to add her approval.

“Eh, but they’re a braw pair, and it’s a wonderful match for Teenie—though not so great when a’s done, for the Laird hasna muckle to gi’e them. But they’re a braw pair, and I felt in my heart to cast a bauchle after them even now.”

Ailie was as blithe about the match as if she herself had been the bride.

Dan went down to the shore to see about the result of the last night’s fishing, in which he had considerable interest, having this year taken a larger share than usual in the herring trade.

Walter made the horse go at a grand pace; the earth was too dull for him; he felt that he would have liked to fly. Rocks, trees, and water glanced by them; the keen air bit their cheeks, refreshing and exhilarating them; the clear sky seemed to smile upon them. They crossed the moorland, and the way

seemed short for both. He told her about that meeting at Dalmahoy on the previous day; of the discussion about the Methven property; of the ridiculous claims which were advanced to a share in it, and of the petty squabbles that were arising out of it. They laughed mightily at all that—money was such a small thing in the account of happiness to them.

Then he spoke about the coming days when they would be settled at Drumliemount, and the countless occupations they were to have; the earnest work there was for them to do, and the joy they would have in doing it.

To all this Teenie listened, smiling approval, but saying little, because she did not know what to say other than "Yes" to every suggestion he made.

Suddenly, as they were drawing near the foot of the hills, she asked—

"Where are you going?"

"To Craighburn."

There was a little start and a flush on Teenie's cheek, as she hastily put her hand on the reins.

"I don't want to go there—any way, not yet."

He looked at her in surprise.

"But Grace wants to see you so much, and to speak to you."

"I don't like to go there yet."

She felt awkward, and unable to define to herself, much less to him, the source of her objection.

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"But to please me?"

A pause, during which he began to draw rein.

"Very well, if you want me to go, I'll go."

He gave the horse head again, and they went on, but he was not quite so buoyant as he had been at the beginning of the journey.

CHAPTER IX.

AT CRAIGBURN.



HEY drove into a bosky glen, the hills rolling upward on either side, purple with heather, so that Teenie felt as if she were in the hollow between two great waves at sea. They crossed a little gray stone bridge with low parapets, beneath which a burn, that came glancing and waving like a silver ribbon down from the hills, ran singing a merry song; they entered at a large wooden gate, and drove up to a white house which was hidden from the roadway by trees.

Grace was on the lawn, a broad-brimmed white-and-black ("pepper-and-salt," boys called it) straw hat on her head, with long black ribbons hanging loose. As soon as she

heard the wheels, she hurried to the entrance to receive her visitors. Walter was already on the doorstep, helping Teenie to descend. She jumped down, and at that minute Grace caught the girl in her arms and kissed her.

Teenie was taken by surprise ; she was unaccustomed to such warmth of salutation, and so she shrank back a little, her head drooping shyly.

Curious that this girl who could remain unmoved in the midst of a storm, who had never shrunk from the gaze of man or woman, should suddenly feel awkward and shy in the presence of one who had proved herself a true friend.

“ I am glad to see you here, Teenie, and very pleased,” said Grace, in a low sweet voice ; and Teenie immediately felt ashamed of the attempt she had made on the road to delay the visit.

“ I would have been over at the Norlan’ myself, if you had not come,” Grace went on with simple earnestness, “ for I wanted so

much to see you, and to wish you a joyful future—as I am sure it will be.”

“Thank you,” was all Teenie could say, for she still felt strange and awkward.

She had often before met Grace, and had been always happy with her. But then they had met on the shore, amongst the boats and the nets, where Teenie was quite at home; and then they had met before Walter had told her his story. Now the whole world seemed to have changed and become strange to her, and all its people different from what they used to be.

“But come away and get your shawl off, and then we’ll send Walter about his business, to smoke or to read, or to do what he likes, and we’ll have a nice long chat all to ourselves,” said Grace, with her pleasant smile, leading the way into the house.

Teenie looked anxiously at Walter, as if she would ask him not to leave her; but he was busy giving some directions to the groom, and did not observe her. So there

was nothing for her to do but to follow Grace.

There are faces—mere faces—which *flash* upon you and electrify you. They strike you in the street, on a country road, in the house, in the theatre, or in a railway carriage : only one glimpse, one bright look, and you are spellbound—ready to follow that face wherever it may lead you, to good or ill. This kind of electrical face accounts for many wild, incongruous, and insane acts of men. Women are sometimes, but comparatively rarely, subject to a similar influence.

Such a face was Grace Wishart's.

A naturally pale complexion, looking paler by contrast with her dark hair ; eyes large and deep brown, almost black ; features singularly regular, but somewhat pinched, as if by much suffering. A sad face ; but when she smiled all sense of sadness disappeared, the very faults of the face became attractions, for features and eyes glowed with intense sympathy.

Figure, small and delicate, but endowed with a spirit which gave almost unnatural activity to her slight frame. The figure would have been perfect but for the right shoulder, which was deformed—slightly, but sufficiently so to be a distinct scar upon her beauty, and to be the subject of the nicknames and jests of children and foolish or cruel men.

She had suffered terribly when a child, on account of this physical misfortune ; she had been often so severely tried, that she had felt and wished to be wicked in order to punish her tormentors. But she had grown up good and gentle ; the ready helper of all who suffered ; the comforter and adviser of those who staggered under the blows of fortune. Her income, small though it was, enabled her to relieve the pressing wants of poverty ; but her own good-nature did far more than money to soothe and relieve troubled hearts.

“ Miss Grace ” became a name to be loved and revered throughout the country. Wherever sickness showed itself, she was

here to help and comfort ; wherever sorrow had laid its heavy hand, her voice and presence brought speedy relief. Wherever her steps passed, she left a trace behind her, bright as a moon's path on a calm sea.

"She's Grace by name, and grace by nature," said Todd the miller, who was not given to sing the praises of womankind generally.

Her father died when she was very young ; her mother, a sister of Dalmahoy's, and by many years his senior, was almost a constant invalid, and severely tasked her daughter's time and patience.

But Mrs. Wishart, who had married late in life, and had been blessed with only the one child, had no idea of her own infirmity. When getting into bed on one occasion (she was close upon seventy then) she felt some twinges of rheumatism.

"Eh, Grace," she cried, "if the Lord be pleased to spare me to grow old, what's to become of me, if I have the rheumatics now?"

From a very early age the entire management of Craighburn had devolved upon Grace. She had known much bitterness in childhood, she had known nothing of the pleasures of girlhood, and the necessity to think and act for herself and others from youth onward made her feel quite old, whilst in years she was quite young.

This was the lady at whose embrace Teenie felt shy.

Leading her upstairs, she spoke to her in a quiet pleasant way about her father and his affairs, about Ailie, and the doos—about everything she thought could interest her. But still the girl was awkward and could not feel at ease. Then Grace spoke of her mother, and how she was always expecting to be up and doing as briskly as in the far-back days before she had married; of the folk at Rowanden, and the various ailments from which they suffered; of the farmers round-about, and their people.

Teenie answered in short uncomfortable

sentences, which supplied no impetus to the conversation. Grace was very patient, and would take nothing amiss ; indeed, she knew that it would have been wrong to do so, for she had an instinctive appreciation of all the difficulty Teenie experienced in speaking to her, and she was doing her best to remove it. She knew that Teenie was aware of all that had passed between herself and Walter.

She helped Teenie—much against that young lady's will—to take off her shawl, and then she looked at her with honest admiration : the lithe shapely form, the rich fair hair, and the bright fresh face, looking all the more beautiful under its expression of shyness that was almost timidity.

“ Ah ! I never thought you were so bonnie, Teenie, until now,” exclaimed Grace, sincerely proud of her, although she could not help a faint regretful remembrance of her own misfortune in presence of this perfect embodiment of youth. “ Walter has been lucky, and you will be a good wife to him.”

“I’ll try,” said Teenie, wishing with all her heart that she could find something warmer and more expressive to say.

“I’m sure you will, and it was very kind of you to come to me and let me be the first to say ‘God bless you and him,’ as I do, very earnestly.”

Teenie felt that she was receiving thanks which she did not deserve. She could not bear that, and she broke the spell which bound her tongue.

“You are not to thank me for coming,” she said hurriedly; “it was his doing. I did not want to come—at least not yet. I thought—I felt——”

She stammered, stopped, afraid to say something that might give pain, and looked helplessly at Grace, whose calm face was a little paler than usual. She spoke tenderly, as if Teenie were the one who needed sympathy and not herself.

“Come and sit down here, Teenie” (placing her in a big old-fashioned arm-chair, and seat-

ing herself in a straight-backed high one); "I can talk to you better there. When you are standing you look so big and strong that I feel half afraid of you."

They both laughed at that, and they felt more companionable, that is, more equal than they had done yet. Grace proceeded—

"I am glad you have spoken so frankly, and I still thank you for coming, for I know that you are glad you came, now you find it gives me pleasure."

"Yes, very glad."

"Well, I want to speak to you very seriously, and I would never have been able to do so if you had not spoken out just now. Walter has told you what has passed between us; I am very fond of him, and always will be. He is true and earnest; I want him to be happy, and just because I am fond of him I want him to marry you, because that will make him happy; and I want you to think of me and love me as the dear sister of both, for

I shall always love you both very much. Do you think you can do that?"

Teenie looked at her, wide-eyed, wondering—never doubting her, but wondering how she could say in one breath that she loved the man, and yet that she was content he should marry somebody else. She would not have felt so, and therefore, of course, could not have said it. What was the difference between them, then? Was there not something very bad in her, that she did not feel like Grace? Was there not something very wicked in her, that she did not feel more acutely sorry than she did for the pain Grace must be suffering? She could not tell, but she felt almost inclined to envy Grace the power of making this sacrifice.

From her babyhood, in trifles and in serious matters, Teenie had always shown a restless desire to be equal to everything and everybody. She had never seen any of the fishermen perform a feat which she did not attempt, and attempt again, until she

could do it as well as, or better than, her example.

“ I wish I could tell you what I’m thinking,” she cried distressedly ; “ I wish he had never seen me, for he ought to have married you ; he would have been far happier than he can ever be with me.”

And she stared vacantly at the window, as if seeking in space some means of altering the arrangement yet.

“ Hush, Teenie ! you must not speak that way. Think how much he cares for you before he would have—altered his plans.”

She was going to say, “ Before he would have sought my leave to break off his engagement with me,” but she stopped in time.

“ I wish I could be like you, Miss Wish-art,” said Teenie, with such a plaintive look, full of such a pitiful sense of her own failings, that Grace’s whole heart was drawn towards her.

“ You must call me Grace, and you must

not wish to be anybody but yourself—for it's Teenie he wants, and nobody else."

"Ay, but I begin to feel there are so many things I am stupid and ignorant about, that——"

Grace would not allow her to finish.

"You are a brave, bonnie lass, and we are all fond of you, and that's everything. Even the Laird said he admired you, and gave his consent at once, when we were expecting a fine to-do. Now I am your sister, am I not?"

Teenie's face brightened, and the two girls clasped hands as she replied in her fearless, honest way—

"Yes."

"And you will always like me and believe in me?"

"I cannot help doing that."

"Very well, it's a bargain, mind you, and I will hold you to it." Grace smiling, held up her finger in a mock threatening way.

"Remember, I am your elder sister, with

great experience of the world, and I shall be very severe if you ever dare to say another word against Teenie. I won't be afraid of you, although you are ever so much bigger and bonnier than me."

Teenie was amused, and all her shyness disappeared—the affectionate nature of Grace had entirely overcome it. They laughed together, and there was no longer any hesitation between them.

They went out to the garden exchanging confidences about the management of pigeons and bees, about flowers and cooking. Teenie explained that the proper way to cook a yellow haddock was to toast only one side—the skinny side—so that all the juice might be preserved in the other. Love and cookery supplied delightful subjects of conversation.

They sat down on the green knoll, backed by rose-bushes and the bee-hives, Grace a little below her "big sister," as she called Teenie, so that she might look up and

admire her, which she was never tired of doing.

Walter appeared in the distance smoking ; he saw the two, and halted, a glad smile on his face. Suddenly he hastened into the house, and reappeared with Grace's painting paraphernalia.

"Sit there," he cried gaily. "I want to make a sketch of you two—it will be something by which to remember this day."

He sketched, they all chatted, and they were very happy. The song of birds, the hum of the bees, and the perfume of flowers around them contributed to their pleasure. Beyond the garden was a field of ripe barley, its long beards drooping gracefully under the weight of its own rich burden, showing what the farmers like to see, "fine sweiyed (swayed) heads." They were like ladies fingers stretched towards something they feared to touch, yet trembling in their eagerness to reach it. Then the wind swept over

the yellow mass, and it rolled and murmured like the wavelets of a loch.

Grace declared that the sketch flattered her far too much, and did not make Teenie half so handsome as she really was; but Teenie thought it was quite the other way, and that lady sitting there was much too nice for her. So there was a pretty dispute between them. Walter said he would keep the daub himself, since they were not satisfied with it, but he thought it wasn't bad.

They enjoyed his pretended vanity; and the lovers drove away from Craighburn.

Grace watched them till they had passed the gate and were hidden from her by the trees.

"They will be very happy," she thought, "and I am glad."

She went quietly about the ordinary affairs of the household, just as if there were no pain at her heart, just as if she were not trying with all her might to close eyes, ears, and mind to the wild cry that was swelling her breast.

“They will be very happy,” she kept on saying to herself, as if the words were a charm to protect her from bitter thought, “and I am glad.”

She waited upon her mother, who was a prisoner in a big arm-chair that was like a sentry-box with the top off, and who was always fretting that the days passed and she was not yet able to walk over to Dalmahoy to see her brother as she used to do. He was sure to be getting into some mischief; he always did when she was long away from him; he was such a young, hair-brained youth!

Grace was gentle, patient as ever, and promised that they should drive over some day soon to see the Laird.

“Toots, drive! Can I not walk as I used to do?” was the impatient cry of the old lady.

But at last Grace went to her own room and sat down to think.

It was indeed a heavy hand that was laid

upon her. From her earliest childhood she had striven to do what was right, and yet it seemed as if the more she strove the heavier became the cross she bore. Why was it that she should suffer thus, and why should these bitter thoughts come now? Because of Walter? Well, why should he leave her? She was older, but not much; she was not so very hideous, and she loved him very dearly.

She looked up almost wildly. The glass was before her—the beautiful face, and the shoulder which seemed to make a mockery of her beauty.

She shrank downward, covering her face.

But they would be very happy, and she was glad.

CHAPTER X.

THE GOLDEN AGE.



HE result of the excursion to Craighburn was a source of intense joy to Walter Burnett. He had determined upon the visit after much hesitation, for naturally under the circumstances he had feared that the interview might prove unpleasant to all parties. But Grace and Teenie were friends. He did not think he could have been happy otherwise. He was not vain enough to think that Grace would suffer very much on his account, but he knew that she must experience disappointment and annoyance when the fact came to be known to their friends that her marriage was defini-

tively broken off, and that he was about to marry Thorston's daughter.

He believed that what he had done was right; and, with good reason, he thought of Grace with deep and tender admiration for her generous readiness to release him from an engagement which, although not made by himself, he had acquiesced in by his silence. But he could not avoid an uneasy feeling that he had been unkind to her; at moments he was troubled by a suspicion that it would have been truer and braver to have closed up in his own breast for ever this love to which he had yielded, and, without a word, to have fulfilled his engagement. But would that have been honest to her—to have made her his wife whilst his tenderest and best thoughts were with another? No, that could not have been just to her. Then he looked at Teenie, and he felt so full of joy that he could see no further. One is stupid when very happy; we need the sting of sorrow to make us wise.

Although Teenie was somewhat silent on the way home, he knew that she was pleased; and he obtained from her the admission that she was glad she had yielded to his persuasion and gone to Craighburn—Miss Wishart had been so good and kind to her. That Grace would be so, he had never doubted; but it made him the happier to know that Teenie was sensible of it.

“Ay,” he said, playfully making the whip crack over the horse’s head; “the highest reputation a man’s talents may win for him is nothing compared to the affection which simple goodness will attain. But it requires genius to be good.”

He laughed at this sententiousness; but he was earnest enough, nevertheless. He was thinking of his own aims, and half-conscious of weakness in himself which threatened to mar all that he hoped to do.

Teenie looked at him, wondering how it was that he could have turned away from Grace Wishart for her sake. For a minute

her face was darkened by a doubt that they were making a blunder somehow, for which they might suffer sadly by-and-by. But his dauntless enthusiastic love and her own affection dispelled the cloud immediately.

It was all so strange, driving along in the bright sunshine with him, knowing that they belonged to each other now, and that they were to go on this way side by side through life—he holding the reins, of course, just as he was doing now, occasionally touching her hand with tender warmth, glancing with fond smiles in her face, and even (in some very quiet parts) stealing an arm round her waist, giving her a hug and a kiss in defiance of all decorum.

She felt more and more impressed by the sense that she was not the same as yesterday; but she could not understand what was the nature of the mysterious change which had taken place during the night. She hesitated about what she was going to say; she hesitated about her movements in a way that she

had never done before, and for which she could find no satisfactory reason. She used to speak out whatever thought came uppermost; now she regarded him first with a quick timorous glance, as if seeking his approval.

It was a fairy story, or a dream, and it was very sweet. Here was the prince (he was the Laird's son, and the Laird was a man of importance in her eyes) come to take the simple daughter of the fisherman away to a grand castle; and she was to be decked out in silks and braids of the rarest; many servants were to wait upon her; horses and chariots were to be at her command; and barges glittering with golden masts and silver sails were to convey her across the seas whither she willed to go. It was very beautiful. She knew of such things in ballads and legends; but who could have thought that she was to become the heroine of such a romance? It was almost too good to be true.

Dan came home to dinner, and feasted rarely upon prime corned beef—fishermen as a rule have a preference for “fleshers’” meat—turnips and potatoes. Walter feasted too, and remained the whole afternoon. Dan found himself in the way; he grumbled, and kept as much out of sight as possible.

In the moonlight the lovers were still together, walking upon the headland. They halted beside a clump of scraggy trees—the moorland reaching towards the hills behind them, the sea radiant with silver streams before them.

The shadows of the branches formed exquisite lacework at their feet; they stood in a fairy circle of delicate tracery—involved and uncertain in its forms as their own future; changing with every breath of wind, but beautiful as their hopes.

Her life had been a happy one, brightened by many homely joys and little adventures along the shore; her will in all things unconstrained. But there had been long mono-

tonous stretches in it, too, where the bare moorland looked dull and bleak, and her limbs thrilled with energies for which there was no outlet. Then the restless spirit of the sea seemed to possess her, and she hungered to see and to know the something which lay beyond the encircling horizon.

Curiosity almost as much as affection made her think eagerly, yet with a strange timidity, of her marriage-day. She dreamt of new scenes, new duties, and a purpose in life that would fill her mind and occupy her restless hands ; to Walter she would be indebted for all this, and to him she owed much of the inspiration of her vague imaginings. She was very proud of him and grateful to him.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ORDEAL.



HE Laird rode over to the Norlan' Head, next forenoon, trim, brisk, and youthful.

He had received another letter from Edinburgh, confirming his fondest hopes, and he was in a blithe humour although he had quarrelled with several relatives and a number of friends, because he had assured them that they had no prospect of obtaining a penny from the Methven estate, and that he had good reason to believe he knew the heir, whilst he declined at that moment to make the intelligence public.

“ You’re just a greedy old tyke, and I’m satisfied you mean to have something out of

it for your own pouch," said Aunt Jane, his maiden sister, who lived in a little villa on the outskirts of Kingshaven, and on a moderate income maintained her position as one of "the gentry."

"'Pon my soul, cousin, you force me to suspect you, since you will not deal openly with us," said the general—General Forbes, long retired on half-pay—"why should there be any secret in a family so united as ours, especially when our interests are in common?"

"But you'll tell us in confidence, Laird?" said Widow Smyllie, a smooth-faced handsome little lady, with a large family, and therefore anxious to increase her means.

The provost, Dubbieside, modestly advanced his claim to know the secret on the score of justice—as a magistrate he ought to know how the matter stood, in order to be able to advise others.

But the Laird was neither to be gibed, threatened, nor cajoled into a confession of

his secret. He magnanimously overlooked all the disagreeable things which were said of himself, and delivered a patriotic oration on the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and assured them that his only interest in the matter was to see that every one should have justice—that was, full satisfaction of all their claims.

Aunt Jane went off severely threatening that she would never darken his doors again.

The general swore that, if there was law in the land, he would punish the Laird for his attempted trickery.

The provost mildly declared that in his own behoof, and in behoof of others, he must enter a formal protest against the singular conduct of Dalmahoy.

Widow Smyllie playfully touched his arm, and with a coaxing look said in her smooth voice—

“ But you’ll not forget the five fatherless bairns, Laird? You know what a struggle I have to put them forward in the world, and

you won't forget them if you have any influence in the matter."

"But that is just what I have not, my dear, and these fools snap and snarl at me because they will not believe me. I have no power whatever: I can do nothing for anybody—not even for myself. It is entirely a matter of law, and I, having had some interest in the man, happened to make inquiries, which were answered in confidence. Without betraying that confidence, I wished to save you folk from wasting time and temper over a matter which I know cannot benefit any of you."

"But you'll try to get us a little?" pleaded the widow, smiling so sweetly, and not believing a word of what he said any more than the others.

"If you will show your relationship to Methven, on the mother's side, I'll do everything I can to help you. I can say no more."

The widow did not even then think it a

pleasant duty to hunt up her relationship with George Methven's mother ; but she smiled and thanked Dalmahoy as if he had done her the greatest kindness, and went away thinking that he was the most awful hypocrite she had ever come across.

The Laird did not care ; he knew that he had spoken the absolute truth, and what he did not wish to make known he had frankly told them. He was a little irritated, perhaps, that they should be so inconsiderate and so indifferent to the true principles of action, either in public or private affairs ; but then, what could you expect from people who had given no attention to the policy of the nation !

So when he received the second letter from the lawyers, he rode over to the Norlan' Head in high " fettle."

Alison saw him coming, and ran to warn Teenie, who was at that moment busy with the preliminary mysteries of kippering salmon.

“Guid be here, lassie !” cried Ailie, thrusting her away from the table, and snatching a large ashet out of her hands, “you shouldna fash wi’ thae things now. You’re going to be a leddy, and you maun learn no to soil your hands, least of all to gar them smell of fish. There’s the Laird coming, I’s e warrant to back-spear you, and examine you in your carritchers (catechism) maybe, and no a minute for you to change your gown.”

Ailie’s idea of the Laird’s visit was that he intended to put his future daughter-in-law through an examination such as the children of the parish school were annually subjected to in his presence.

Teenie was not half so much discomposed as Ailie by the near approach of the ordeal she had to undergo—for it was an ordeal.

“Where’s father ?” she asked quietly.

“He’s out-by, some gate ; but haste you, and put on your silk gown, and make yourself braw, or the Laird come.”

Teenie with the utmost calmness washed

her hands in a basin which stood on the dresser, but displayed no intention of leaving the kitchen.

Ailie halted midway in the floor, her hands full of the ashet, her eyes full of wonder and indignation.

“Is it possible that you mean to meet the Laird in that fashion?” she cried; “are you clean out of your judgment, or what’s wrang with you? Gae ’wa this minute and put on your brows, or I’ll think you’re daft.”

“Never you heed, Ailie,” said Teenie doggedly; “if the Laird will not have me for his daughter this way, he’ll not have me any other way.”

“The Lord be merciful to us!” groaned Ailie; “the bairn has neither respect nor reason.”

But she had taken one of her humours, and was not to be moved. She would not have changed her dress if Walter had been coming—to be sure, she might have looked to see that her hair was in order—and why

should she do it because his father came? No; he should see her just as she was, and he could be pleased or not—just as he liked.

The Laird entered, followed by Dan.

The Laird was on his grand horse; he was younger than ever—he was more condescending than ever.

“Where is Christina?” he was saying, as he entered the kitchen; and seeing her, he advanced quite gallantly and kissed her, much to her discomfiture.

“I must salute my daughter,” he said gaily, and repeated the kiss as if he liked it; whilst she shrank back, bewildered and confused.

She had been prepared to meet him, but she had not been prepared for such a display of affection and respect.

“Why, now, this is charming,” he said, holding her hands and looking at her admiringly. “I see you have not been foolishly preparing to receive me in your Sabbath clothes. You have paid me the very highest

compliment you could pay me, my dear lass ; you have granted me common-sense enough to appreciate the lady, no matter what her attire might be ; and believe me, I am proud of your confidence."

Teenie felt herself quite put out of countenance by his compliments, and by his reference to a matter which only a minute ago had been the subject of a dispute between her and Ailie. But she felt somehow spiteful towards him that he should have thought of such a subject.

"I am glad you are pleased, sir," she said, with a self-possession which was born of her vexation ; "I did not know you were coming to-day, or I would have been better prepared to receive you."

There was a degree of unconscious satire in the answer which amused Dalmahoy.

"Impossible that you could be better prepared than you are," he said, smiling. "I am proud to call you daughter ; and I do not at all wonder, now I look at you again, that

Walter should have defied my wishes and sought you for his wife. I forgave his disobedience before I came here; now I admire it, and freely declare that with the same sweet temptation in my way I would have been disobedient myself."

This was spoken with the air of a man who thought he deserved to be admired alike for his frankness and condescension.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," said Teenie, standing with hands clasped behind her, very much as she used to stand when repeating her lessons to the dominie.

Evidently she did not admire Dalmahoy as he expected. He, intending to be most conciliatory and most kind, provoked in her a spirit of rebellion which threatened to make his visit anything but satisfactory to either party. Walter had sought her because he loved her, and she had accepted him for the same reason, not because he was the Laird's son. Dalmahoy's grand air and his patronage irritated her so that she could have no

sympathetic communion with him. She could not say as she felt, and as she had said to Grace Wishart, she was very glad that Walter loved her, and that she wished to be a true wife to him in all ways. She was rather inclined to be spiteful and dry—as unlike herself as could be. No doubt this was partly due to the feverish excitement of her position.

Thorston stood near the door, hat in hand, his thick curly hair tangled in wild confusion, his hard weather-beaten face cold and apparently indifferent, whilst his eyes moved slowly from Teenie to the Laird, and back to her. Big and stolid, he had no more appreciation of Dalmahoy's condescension than his daughter had; indeed, he had a dull notion that he would be best pleased if the affair should go no further.

Ailie was the only one who seemed disposed to pay proper respect to his Lairdship. She had been fidgeting at the dresser, and at last she wheeled about with the suggestion—

“Will you no bid the Laird ben to the parlour?”

“No, thank you,” said Dalmahoy, before anybody else could speak, and not feeling quite so much at his ease as he liked to feel, whilst Dan was glaring at him with his great dark eyes, just like those of a fish newly out of the water, he thought, and Teenie was so reserved, if not defiant; “no, thank you, I like this homely place best. Nothing is more charming to me than simplicity of manners and life. I am delighted with nothing so much as the privilege of occasionally sharing the plain fair and the—the ordinary ways of my neighbours. Here, of course, I make myself quite at home.”

He was taking advantage of one of the stereotyped phrases of his electioneering days, to get over what seemed to be an awkward pause.

“Ony way, you’ll be seated, Laird,” said Ailie, with her apron dusting a chair which

was already as clean as scrubbing could make it.

“Permit me.”

And the Laird advanced bowing to Teenie with as much courtesy as if she had been a real princess, and conducted her to the chair which had been offered to himself.

“Manners is everything,” muttered Ailie to herself, as she thrust another chair forward for Dalmahoy, which he accepted with the most gracious “Thank you.”

Teenie was fluttered and “put out” by all this. She submitted ; she sat down ; but she was even more rebellious the more polite he showed himself. The Laird, with all his courtesy, unfortunately did not possess the art—which is really born of unselfish good-nature—of making people feel at ease.

“I come to you to-day,” he said, in his best manner, “simply to offer you my sincere congratulations on your approaching union with my son, and to wish you all the happiness which can befall man and wife. Allow me to

say that what I have seen of you leads me to think that you will be a good wife to him, and I do hope that he will make you happy."

He was so very sincere that Teenie felt somewhat ashamed of the almost uncivil way in which she had treated him.

"Thank you," she said, very heartily.

"But I have another subject on which I hope to be able to congratulate you and my son in a few days. I shall not explain myself now, because it might raise hopes which may be vain, and therefore for your sakes I say nothing more than that I expect you to be the happiest and the luckiest couple in all the county."

"We mean to try our best," she said, wondering what he could mean by this vague announcement.

"No doubt of it, and I shall be always proud to think that in my private life, as in my public actions, I have proved myself indifferent to, and incapable of displaying any class prejudices."

That was another grand utterance which she did not understand, but she supposed it meant something very kind, and so she thanked him again.

“Your father I have long respected,” he went on, “yourself I have long esteemed—long before I had any suspicion that there was likely to be an alliance of our families” (if it had been a royal marriage he could not have spoken of it more grandly)—“and now that I see you, simple, gentle, and beautiful, I cannot doubt that my son’s happiness will be safe in your keeping.”

“I hope so, sir.” (She began to feel dazed and bewildered by this flow of words.)

“I trust you will soon learn to look upon me as your second father, whose affection, although it cannot be greater, is certainly not less profound than that of my good friend, Captain Thorston.”

He called him “Captain” as if by some prerogative he conferred a special dignity upon Dan, which at once elevated him

and displayed the magnanimity of the Laird.

Ailie was ready to lay down her life for him—he was “that grand and yet that free.” Teenie was unable to reply, she was so overwhelmed by his kindness. Dan was silent and quite calm: he was utterly unappreciative, for in his eyes Teenie was all the world. If the Queen’s son had come seeking her he would not have thought there was much out of the way in the proposal—when the object was his lass, who could manage a boat as well as the best fisher of Rowanden—ay, and manage the nets too, as well as make them.

He had just a confused notion that the Laird meant to be friendly, and to wish them well.

But when Dalmahoy again referred to the good news with which he intended to surprise them, and to the great fortune which might fall into Teenie’s lap, he was puzzled, for he could not conceive how or whence any special

fortune could come to them. The Laird playfully insisted upon his right to surprise them, and, kissing Teenie again without permitting her to object, he took his leave—charmed, as he said, with his new daughter, and the prospects of his son.

Walter, in feverish anxiety to learn the result of the interview, and forbidden the house during it, by his father, was in the road waiting for somebody to appear with intelligence as to the progress of affairs.

He advanced to the side of his father's horse, with the eager question—

“Well—are you satisfied?”

“Delighted, Walter, delighted—she is a splendid creature, and I admire your taste more than ever,” cried the Laird, making his horse walk so that Walter might keep pace with him.

“You see, sir, she is not one of the fashionable kind of girls; she's not a woman of any particular talent—unless it be fishing,” he added, laughing.

“Toots, man! I abhor your women of talent—did you ever see a modest one? I know that *you* will appreciate my sentiment when I say that I have a ridiculous fancy for old-fashioned virtues; I much prefer commonplace and modesty to genius and indelicacy. Of course I do not mean to deny the pleasures of a talented woman’s society—it is charming for an hour or so. It is like drinking champagne; but you can’t keep on drinking champagne without paying the penalty of a headache. A woman of talent who was modest and loved her home would be a goddess—but we mustn’t look for goddesses off the stage.”

“I can’t tell you how glad I am that you are satisfied with her,” said Walter, thrilling all over with joy.

“Satisfied!—I am charmed—delighted, I tell you; and by my faith you may be thankful that time is on your side, or I would have tried to cut you out even now.”

Walter laughed, and hastened back to the cottage.

The Laird nodded, touched his horse, and galloped home, all a-glow with admiration of Teenie.

He found several letters awaiting him, and amongst them another from the lawyers in Edinburgh, which he opened with eagerness.

He seated himself in the big chair before beginning to read, and leaned back with the air of a man who wishes to enjoy good news to the uttermost.

But, as his eyes glanced over the contents of the letter, he suddenly bent forward with a startled expression. He took off his glasses (the letter lying on his knees) and polished them with the silk handkerchief; put them on again, and steadied himself like a man who braces himself up to some unexpected and disagreeable encounter.

He read the letter again :—

“George Street, Edinburgh.

“SIR,—We hasten to inform you that there

seems to have been some error about the heirship of the Methven estate."

"Then who the devil perpetrated the error but yourselves?" muttered the Laird.

"According to our information the heir was one Christina Thorston, daughter of the sister of the late George Methven's mother; but from information just received we are induced to believe that the said Christina Thorston's mother was not the sister of Methven's mother. If this information should prove to be correct, the Christina Thorston referred to in our former letter is not the heir to the Methven estate."

"Then why did you say so?" growled the Laird.

"We trust this may not have caused you any inconvenience, and can only express our regret that the information first received—

which seemed to bear all the impress of truth—should have betrayed us into this error. We must beg of you to suspend any decision you may be inclined to come to on the subject, until the result of further inquiries is known.

“We are, sir, etc.,

“PATTERSON & GREIG, W.S.”

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD ADVICE.



ALMAHOY meditated: a blank look on his face, chin buried in his chest, and the letter dangling over his knee.

The result of his meditation was the honest admission—

“What a confounded fool I have been!”

The sweet visions of an unencumbered estate, of boundless financial resources which would have enabled him to develop the mineral wealth of his land, and to prosecute successfully various other speculations—certain to return millions, if only “capital” were forthcoming to work them—all melted into thin air, and he had committed himself to

the union of his son with old Thorston's daughter—no longer Captain Thorston.

If he had been only a little more frank, Thorston might have set him right at once. If only his good-nature had not betrayed him—as it so often did—into the desire to give them a pleasant surprise; if only he had not been tempted by the wish to appear before them all one fine morning in the character of a noble benefactor conferring untold wealth upon the humble child of his adoption—he had rehearsed the scene repeatedly in imagination—and receiving their amazed and grateful thanks, he might have avoided this scrape. Of course it was ridiculous to think of his son marrying a girl of Teenie's position without some much stronger inducement than a mere fancy. But then he had given his consent unconditionally and in the most formal fashion.

He summoned Peter Drysdale. The man had been, with only one brief interval, all his life in the service of Dalmahoy. The

interval occurred when, tempted by the natural beauty of Canada, and the opportunity it offered to the poorest for making a fortune, as represented by a panorama exhibited in the village, he took his eldest son and made for the land of promise. On his arrival he saw a dismal uncultivated waste, and found that life was as hard, and in some respects not quite so comfortable, there as at home. He was filled with despair as he looked at the land which had been allotted to him.

“Eh, man, Jock,” he groaned to his son, “this is no the panoramy!”

He hastened back to the old country, and was permitted to resume his former position at Dalmahoy. His son remained in Canada and prospered, so that Drysdale was sometimes disposed to lament his hasty return. He was one of those men who are doomed always to see the tide of fortune behind them.

When the door had been closed the Laird

spoke as if inspired by some trivial curiosity.

“You remember the woman Methven?”

“Fine; she was the mother of the lass that——”

“Just so, I know all that,” interrupted Dalmahoy; “but she had a second daughter, much younger than the one you allude to—do you remember her?”

“Mistress Methven had half a dozen daughters, at least—some of them living yet, and as decent women as you could find,” answered Drysdale in his melancholy tone. “What was the name of the one you mean?”

“I don’t know—but she married Thorston.”

“Oh—her? She wasna a Methven ava, but just a neighbour’s lass that the wifie Methven got to take care of—that is, if you mean Jeanie Kerr, who was Skipper Thorston’s guidwife.”

“Are you sure of that?”

“Perfect sure—everybody ken’d it, though

she was married out of the auld wifie Methven's house."

There! if he had only taken the least trouble to investigate details, he would not have required to cross his own doorstep in order to discover the real position of affairs. But the Laird never could attend to trifles; his mind was far too much engaged with grand results to bother about details; and somehow these confounded details were always interfering with the most brilliant calculations of his fertile brain.

There could be no longer any doubt about it—the lawyers had blundered—and he had blundered in the most reprehensible way, because the most ridiculous, seeing that the information necessary to set him right had been all the time within hand's reach.

He dismissed Drysdale, and then he heartily cursed his own stupidity and his own blindness. Why had he not looked into the matter a little more closely? Why had Walter come to him just at the moment

when he was most ready to believe what he wished to believe was the case? Confound them all! they had led him into a pretty mess, and he could not see any satisfactory way out of it, with all his experience of political manœuvring.

Enter Walter, face flushed and eyes bright with pleasure. He had been walking at a great pace, keeping time with the merry whirl of his thoughts.

“We have settled it,” he said briskly.

“Settled what, sir?”

“The day of the marriage—there’s no use putting off time, so we have fixed this day month. By that time we can have the cottage at Drumliemount quite ready, and I shall begin work at once. We are to have everything as quiet as possible, and we go straight to our own home. Of course the marriage will take place at the Norlan’ Head.”

“Of course her marriage should, under the patronage of the fisher colony, and with

a savoury smell of fine fresh herring prevailing."

Walter stared at his father, who sat looking at him over his glasses. The tone and the manner were so peculiar, and were so different from those he had used in the morning. Walter gave a short uneasy laugh.

"I like fresh herring," he said lightly; "and I am glad you do not wish to have the marriage here, for Thorston would never have consented to that. He would have taken the proposal as a kind of insult, and it would have displayed a prejudice——"

"Displayed a fiddlestick," interrupted the Laird restlessly, for he had not yet made up his mind how to declare his changed purpose.

He got up, crossed the room two or three times, then he halted, and, in his best Parliamentary style, addressed his son — playing with his glasses all the while.

“Prejudice is a characteristic of weak minds; I have none. I am practical; consequently I am occasionally disagreeable. Every man who is worth his salt is occasionally disagreeable. Every man who has any right to claim individuality of character, finds it occasionally necessary to change his opinions and views of things political and things social. I find it necessary to change my views.”

“In regard to what, sir?” asked Walter, a good deal bewildered by his father’s grandiloquence, and quite unsuspecting of the end towards which he was driving.

But that brought him to the point too abruptly. The Laird disliked to give pain, because the sufferer bothered him.

“You are too fast, Walter—you leap to conclusions without arguing them out thoroughly; and unfortunately you act upon these rash conclusions, thereby causing yourself and others a great deal of useless trouble.”

“ I really cannot discover what you refer to, sir. Have I been bungling in anything lately ?”

“ Indeed you have been bungling, and I am sorry to say ” (with beautifully expressed mild self-condemnation) “ so have I.”

“ That’s vexatious ; but what is it—money ?”

“ No—and yet, indirectly, yes,” proceeded the Laird, feeling that he had got the sympathy of his son with him so far. “ Now I wish to place this matter before you in such a plain way that it may appeal directly to your own common-sense.”

“ Thank you.” (He knew that it was something very disagreeable which the Laird’s individualism compelled him to utter.)

“ You know, Walter, that I never do anything without a clearly defined motive. Well, when I consented to your marriage with Christina Thorston, I had a motive.”

“You wished to make us happy,” said Walter, with a startled smile.

“Exactly, but not quite in the way you are thinking. What is it the poet says?—‘Love feeds the soul’—that’s not right, but it is something to that effect; and that is the way you are thinking of happiness. I am practical: I say love is beautiful, love adds vastly to our enjoyment of life; but I also say love requires a leg of mutton to stand on.”

The Laird chuckled at his own joke. Walter’s face began to darken, but he remained respectfully silent.

“You are young; you are in love; you are enthusiastic: therefore you are incapable of judging for yourself at present in things practical. I am—well, we won’t say old, but considerably your senior; I am experienced; I am a politician: therefore I am the proper person to direct your present course, so that hereafter you may be grateful to me and thankful on your own account.”

“I shall be pleased to have your advice, sir,” said Walter, his lips closing tightly.

“And I hope you will also be pleased to follow it. You have chosen a career—against my advice, remember—in which the worldly emoluments are small, very small. You may be useful—I will go as far as to say that I believe you would be useful even without a penny of your own—but your power of usefulness would be incalculably increased if you had independent means.”

“Father, I cannot look upon the work in that way.”

“You must allow me to look upon it in that way, however, and to advise—if necessary to command you. When I consented to this marriage I believed Christina Thorston to be the heiress to the Methven estate—that was the surprise I told you was in store.”

“And now you have found that she

is not the heiress?" (very coldly and deliberately).

"Yes, and therefore I say to you this affair must proceed no further. You are not to marry Christina Thorston."

CHAPTER XIII.

TEMPTATION.



ALTER had been prepared for something disagreeable; but he was not prepared for the command to break off his marriage. At the words he lifted his head, quick and angry; then suddenly became calm, smiling incredulously.

“That is not a pleasant joke, sir—I thought for an instant that you were serious.”

He was so quiet and so respectful that he made it appear as if such a proposal could not be anything but a jest—and a very poor one.

The Laird was hurt; he had wrought up to his climax, as he thought, so cleverly, and

with such keen argument, that it seemed impossible to deny the force and necessity of his conclusion. And then to have it all treated as a bad joke !

“ I am perfectly serious, Walter ; I speak for the girl’s sake as much as for yours ; and you will offend me very much if you do not behave in this matter like a man of sense.”

There came over Walter’s face a dark expression—as if he had moved into a black shadow—which the father knew to be indicative of the very worst phase of his character—utter and unreasoning stubbornness.

“ And a man of sense would—— ?”

“ Would see that I have spoken out of the kindest feeling for you and for her ; and he would agree with me.”

“ I do not doubt the kindness of your motives, father ; but I am sorry that I must offend you, for I must ask you not to speak of this again. Our marriage will take place on this day month.”

He wheeled about and quitted the room

before Dalmahoy could recover breath to reply. He was altogether taken aback by the calm resolution of his son ; he could have argued with him, and beaten him in the argument, he flattered himself. But when a man quietly declines all discussion, and gives no opportunity to bring him to reason, what can you do but leave him to his own devices ?

The Laird was angry. Children, he thought, were very different from what they used to be when a parent's word was law. He had been anxious only to insure the future welfare of "that youth," and here he was treated with silent contempt for his pains. Worse, he had been made to feel that it was a sort of contemptible thing to do, to make mischief between two young folk. But he was angry, and he was resolved that his word should be respected—resolved in fact to have his own way, whatever might be the cost ; and he magnified the wisdom of his own ways, in order to quench that irritating

suggestion of conscience that it would be best not to interfere any further.

“ But these hot-headed youths and thoughtless lassies are always fools, and they blame their friends when it is too late to mend the blunders they have made themselves. I will not give them a chance to blame me. I shall do my best to save them from this folly.”

He really had no evil intention ; at that moment he was not thinking of his own hopes at all ; he was only speculating upon the future troubles which Walter was preparing for himself with such dour perversity.

The Laird rode over to Craighburn.

He passed by fields of ripening grain which swayed softly to the wind, and sparkled yellow and green under the sun-rays ; the distant roar of the sea swept over the moorland, and the hills before him looked blue, and black, and purple under the rapidly changing touch of the afternoon light. He returned civil salutes to the hearty greetings

of the farmers who passed him in their gigs or on horseback ; but his thoughts were busy with one subject, and he could not halt to discuss the game-laws, or even the law of hypothec, with any of his acquaintances, though as a rule he was ready enough to avail himself of any opportunity to express his decided opinions on the popular side of any of these questions.

He found his sister, Dame Wishart, much as usual, a prisoner to her big chair, and impatiently waiting for the time when she would be able to march out as formerly, and pay her respects to the neighbours.

“ Ay, Hugh, it’s a sight for sair een to see you,” she muttered ; “ but if I wore breeks, and had a vote, you’d be here fast enough.”

“ You forget that I have no interest in votes now—I gave up Parliament twenty years ago.”

“ Twenty years ago—you’re raving, man ; it cannot be. I mind weel enough it was just

the other day you were elected ; and did you not spout that speech of yours to me and the cabbages in the cauld winter morning, when the curlies, tipped with the frost, looked like a crowd of auld wives' heads in white mutches ! Oh, I mind fine."

He made no further attempt to undeceive her as to the lapse of time ; it would have been cruel to do so, the mistake afforded her so much enjoyment.

He signified to Grace that he wished to speak to her privately, and they went downstairs together.

" I want to see your pansies, Grace—didn't you take the prize at the last show ?"

" Yes, and I am very proud of it, for the pansies are my favourites ; there is something so very subdued about them—they always make me think of sad eyes ; they look up so wistfully, as if seeking for some lost hope. There, you will think me sentimental, uncle, and that would be dreadful."

She, laughing, snatched up her garden-hat,

took his arm, and they went out, followed by her dog, Pate. It was a shaggy collie, and seemed to be the most ferocious of animals, on account of the teeth of the under jaw overlapping the upper lip. For this "shot" mouth and his general ugliness he was, when a pup, condemned to be drowned; from that fate Grace rescued him, and as he grew up he showed a devotion to her alone, which suggested that he understood how much he was indebted to her. She used to say that he was the ugliest dog in the world, and the kindest and most sagacious. He did everything but speak, and he tried that sometimes when expressing thanks to his mistress.

Grace exhibited her pansies, and the Laird examined them absently; indeed, he did not show the interest in them he professed to feel. They walked to the foot of the garden where a green bank, now studded with buttercups and daisies, kept the burn in bounds during the frequent floods of winter.

She gathered flowers for a nosegay, and,

when they reached a bower covered with honeysuckle, she sat down to arrange them. Pate stretched himself at her feet, his nose resting on his paws. The Laird remained standing.

“I want your assistance, Grace.”

“In what way, uncle? You know how it pleases me to do anything for you” (her dainty fingers busy selecting the flowers from her lap).

“It is with Walter.”

There was just the least little start, and the fingers trembled for a second on the stem of a rose.

“What has he been doing?”

“Making a fool of himself, as usual. Now, Grace, there is nobody who has so much influence over him as you have——”

“Wrong, uncle; my influence must give place to that of Teenie, now.”

The Laird’s eyes twinkled. Teenie! he had not thought of her, but she might be made the chief power in his scheme.

“ But it is in regard to her that I want you to help me—I want to have this ridiculous marriage broken off at once.”

Grace’s head drooped over her flowers. She spoke in a low agitated voice—

“ I thought you had given a full and free consent to the marriage.”

“ Well—yes—but—in fact, things have since come to my knowledge which have induced me to retract. For the girl’s sake as well as Walter’s, I think it right to prevent this affair going any further.”

Her eyes were fixed steadily on the flowers. What a temptation there was offered to her ! Prevent the marriage, and by-and-by—a long time hence—perhaps Walter might come back to her. And his father, who should know best, told her that it was for the girl’s sake as much as Walter’s. It would be right, it would be kind ; and then the dreams of happiness, which she had been trying so hard to forget, might be realized—might——

She got up, scattering the unused flowers

on the ground, and over Pate's ugly head—dusting the fragments off her dress with one hand, while the other held up the bouquet.

“I cannot help you in this, uncle,” she said firmly; “it would be unjust to Walter and cruel to Teenie to interfere with their arrangements now.”

“I thought you cared more for him than to refuse to save him from an act of folly——”

He stopped; her dark eyes were lifted to his face with such a pained look—they were like her pansies with the dew upon them.

“You know that I cannot speak to him on this subject” (voice subdued, but quite steady).

“There, there, child!” exclaimed Dalma-hoy hastily; “I am anxious, therefore I am stupid and selfish; but I am the more anxious now that I see—well, never mind. I shall do what I can.”

“She's at the greetin' for him,” muttered

the Laird, as he rode home, "and he's a bigger fool than I thought. But we'll see."

She felt such a queer aching in her breast that Grace wondered if she had caught cold, or if it could be rheumatism. In her quiet way she was very merry, and Pate gambolled beside her; he was always ready to sympathize with her moods, gay or sad. But he could not see that her gaiety was close kin to tears.

She was indeed glad that she had been able to resist the temptation to join the Laird in his effort to stop the marriage; but she could not help speculating upon what might happen if he should be successful. Then she felt so full of shame and vexation at her own weakness—she felt so bitter against herself that she was ready to use a scourge to her own back with vigour. She would halt, dreaming, eyes fixed on the ground, until Pate roused her by placing his cold nose on her hand. Then she would start, with a kindly word to her friend, and hasten forward.

"Habbie Gowk brought this for you, mem," said a rosy-faced housemaid, handing a letter to her mistress.

"Thank you, Mary" (taking the letter listlessly, but stirring into quick interest when she recognized the penmanship); "tell Habbie to wait."

"Yes, mem ; he's in the kitchen, and his donkey's in the stable-yard, and he says he's had naething to eat or drink the-day, but I think he's gey fou."

"Give him some dinner, then."

"Yes, mem."

And Mary hastened back to the house.

Grace, standing under a hawthorn-tree—bright with red berries, which, by contrast, made her bonnie face appear the paler—read the few lines Walter had written.

Frank and trustful, he was almost cruel in his utter faith in Grace. He forgot, or rather he did not know, what she was suffering. It was a hasty scrawl, telling her that his father had changed his mind about the marriage,

and begging her to help him to satisfy the old gentleman that he was bound to redeem the pledge he had given Teenie.

“There is some wicked perversity in my nature,” he wrote, “for my father’s objections made me feel the more devoted to her.”

He did not mention the motive which inspired his father’s objection—he felt that to be a disgrace to them all.

Grace was pleased that he should appeal to her even in this matter, although her heart ached. How blind and stupid he must be, not to know that every word which showed his devotion to Teenie inflicted a wound upon her, by making her feel the more keenly that the love she craved for was given to another! But he trusted her; he had accepted with blind fidelity the hasty renunciation she had made. He loved her so much that he never doubted her truth. Well, she would be worthy of his trust—but how cruel ‘they all were to come to her in this crisis!

Those wicked feelings which had tortured

her of late began to rise again ; but she would trample them underfoot. She would help Walter and Teenie, and in their happiness she would find her own.

Yet she felt very weak—ah, how she loved him ! She had never known till now how entirely her best thoughts and hopes were concentrated in him. Would Teenie ever love him so ? She dared not answer that, for she feared doing injustice to Teenie—and she was to be his wife. But she was proud now to think of the answer she had given to Dal-mahoy. Ay, she would try, and try very hard, to be worthy of Walter's inconsiderate trust.

She went indoors, leaving Pate unnoticed in the hall, and he looked after her with wistful eyes, sensible that there was something wrong. He sat down and waited, his eyes fixed upon the door of the room, his teeth showing more ferociously than ever.

Grace wrote two brief letters—one to Walter, the other to Teenie. Then she went into the kitchen, followed by Pate, for he was

privileged to go there. It was a bright, tidy place ; dish-covers, polished to a degree, glistening on the walls ; hams and comfortable sides of bacon dependent from the roof, interspersed with netfuls of onions. The kitchen despotism of the cook was unknown to these simple folk, and the mistress was as welcome in that region as in any other part of her own house.

“Where is Habbie ?” she asked, looking round.

“Here, mem,” answered a voice, and the owner appeared from behind a clothes-horse, wiping his mouth—which was full—with the cuff of his coat ; “I hope I see you weel.”

“Thanks, Habbie. I want you to take these notes for me to Mr. Walter Burnett and to Miss Thorston.”

“Oo, ay, it will just be ae errand, for I’m sure to find young Dalmahoy at the Norlan’ Head—he’s aye there ; and there’s fine clashes going round the country about him and Thorston’s lass. She’s a braw quean,

mem, and I wouldna wonder if there was some truth in what a'body says."

"I would like you to go to Dalmahoy first, though."

"Very weel, mem ; it's a gowk's errand, but onything to obleege you."

Grace repeated her instructions, and the man, who had by this time got his mouth emptied, professed the most implicit obedience. As if determined to show that he could be brisk in her service, he finished his cog of ale at a gulp, seized his staff and bonnet, and made for the stable-yard as fast as his lame leg would allow him to go.

He found his donkey at the water-trough, looking rather melancholy ; and, inspired by the importance of his mission, he asked the groom somewhat pompously if his "beast" had got a feed.

"He's had a pickle straw and some thrustles," said the man, laughing, and with mock respect holding out his hand as if for a fee.

“I’m obleeged to ye,” said Habbie, “and I’ll be owing you something at the fair.”

He mounted his steed and rode out of the yard—or court, as it is called—with more importance than the Laird himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

“THE POET.”



ABBIE GOWK—Geikie was the name, but popular humour had transformed it into Gowk, the equivalent of a fool; and Habbie accepted the amendment without murmur—Habbie was a man of importance.

He was a stout thick-set fellow; round cheeks and pale gray eyes; thin hair and shaggy beard; a broken nose, with an emphatic turn-up at the point. Dress: a threadbare tweed shooting-coat, of speckled brown colour, with capacious pockets at either side and in the breast; the side-pockets seemed to be always loaded, so that the coat hung heavily from the shoulders; vest of similar

material, and, in default of buttons, fastened across his breast with large pins, which were very conspicuous ; trousers of moleskin, well patched ; and a fur cap, somewhat greasy, and in several places scalded-looking.

He had been lamed in childhood ; he had been always "half-cracked," and consequently he had never been expected to take part in the hard work of his fellows. However, he learned to read and to write : he became the recognized clerk to all the lads and lasses of the district, who from ignorance or shyness could not write their own letters. This circumstance, combined with the reading of Burns, the Ettrick Shepherd, and other poets, whose works the minister lent him, and something in himself (vanity ?) made him a poet.

He wrote verse as well as prose for his patrons ; and he was rewarded with more hearty meeds of praise than most versifiers enjoy. His lameness interfered with his progress ; he got a donkey for a few shillings, and so he was enabled to travel throughout the

country, independent and happy. He wrote ballads—they were printed at the office of the “Kingshaven Gazette,” on long strips of paper—and, his pockets stuffed with bundles of his own “making,” he wandered about from house to house, and from fair to fair, selling his ballads at a penny apiece. Habbie, his donkey “Beattie” (named after “the Minstrel”), and his verses were recognized as a part of all the local gatherings, into the midst of which he rode always with the same song—

“I’m Habbie Gowk o’ Rowanden ;
Here’s ballants for the maids and men,
I wrat ’em wi’ my ain pen.”

On occasion he was ready enough with sly retort. At the house of a farmer, who soon after the death of his first wife had taken for his second spouse a woman who was a “manager”—that is, extremely stingy—and who covered her stinginess with extreme piety : the mistress entered the kitchen where Habbie, as a matter of course, was about to take his kail with the ploughmen. She was

not pleased by the appearance of this ungodly interloper, and she insisted upon hearing the men say grace before they began their meal. Habbie got up and, remembering the guid-wife who was no more, said—

"Guid and gracious, she is gane,
Proud and saucy she's come hame ;
Cauld kail and little bread—
Oh, guid gracious, that she was dead !"

Habbie was never admitted to that kitchen again. He did not care ; his rhymes and his gossip obtained for him a welcome in so many places.

"How do you make your ballads, Habbie ?" said an aspiring poet to him one day.

"Oo, I make my ballads best when I'm just lying on my back in a ley-field, chawing a carrot."

It was a free and joyful life he led, wandering from town to town, across the moors and through the bosky glens, by the shore and over the hills. But there came a season when he was sick, and harvest was bad, and poor

Habbie and his donkey were like to starve. The Kingshaven Gas-works had just opened, and a time-keeper was wanted. The provost and bailies—meaning kindly—thought this would be an excellent appointment for Habbie. He could write well; he could sum a little; his lameness was no obstacle; and so they offered him the place, making it a solemn condition with him that from that date forth he would never attempt to write a line of verse.

Habbie, weak with sickness, looked at his donkey, and for the donkey's sake agreed. The provost would have had him sell the companion of his wanderings, but that was too much. He refused; so the provost yielded, and Habbie, with his donkey, entered upon the important duties of time and gate-keeper of the Kingshaven and Rowanden Gas-works.

The provost congratulated himself upon having done a charitable action and reclaimed a vagrant. Habbie felt that he had sunk very low in the world, but for the first week he

was punctual and attentive to his duties—the weather happened to be misty and dull. The sun shone—Habbie became restless. Sitting on a high stool in the wooden box at the gate, the time-book before him, and rows of figures dazzling his eyes, he snatched up a scrap of paper and the stump of a pencil, inspired with the grand idea of turning the multiplication table into rhyme. He remembered his pledge, and with a sigh put away the paper and pencil. The high walls which enclosed the gas-works looked to him like the walls of a prison. He began to feel as if he could not breathe in such a narrow space.

At first Dubbieside was proud of his protégé; but Habbie began to make blunders and to drink. He was visited with remonstrances and warnings; he was suspected of having resumed his bad habit of making rhymes, which would account for all his stupidity. He said nothing; he tried to be submissive and to become a "respectable member of the

community," as the provost put it. But he looked wistfully at Beattie grazing contentedly on the roadside; then his eyes wandered over the moorland, and to the blue headline of the hills. He never had any notion until now how hard it was to be respectable.

He began to hate the works, to hate the smell of tar and gas, and to feel more and more oppressed by the high walls. In proportion his longing grew for the freedom of the old life, the sweet smell of the heather and the wild roses.

A crisis came. He horrified the whole community, and nearly ruined the provost's social position, by one wild declaration—

"What for shouldna dogs and donkeys ha'e sowls as weel as us? ay, and even fleas for that matter? They couldna bite in the next world."

It was impossible for honest folk to receive gas in the manufacture of which a man of such terrible opinions had the remotest share. A meeting of the board of directors was

called, and to attend it provost, bailies, and councillors were marching up the street, when they were startled by wild shouts and laughter.

A rabble of boys and girls were coming down from the direction of the gas-works, shouting, laughing, and scampering about in the most riotous manner. In their midst was Habbie Gowk, mounted on his donkey, flaunting yards of ballads over his head, and crying at the pitch of his voice his old song—

"I'm Habbie Gowk o' Rowanden ;
Here's ballants for the maids and men,
I wrat 'em wi' my ain pen."

Dubbieside and his companions were dumb with dismay and indignation. Habbie rode past them in triumph, shaking his ballads under their noses and laughing in their horror-struck faces.

He had broken bounds at last. Sunshine, moorland, and hills, the heather and the wild roses, had carried the day against the dull walls and a sure dinner. Habbie returned to his old nomad kind of life, wrote his ballads

and sold them as he best could, and took his chance with Beattie of bed and board wherever they wandered.

Nothing could ever tempt Habbie to try to be respectable again. In the first trial he had been utterly miserable. "I'd ha'e been food for the worms in another week," he said, "and I was beginning my ain epitaph when Beattie came to me ; syne I just louped on his back, tell't the gas and the provost to gang to the deevil, and awa' we came."

He was happy and contented in his way. He was much liked by the women, men, and bairns of the two counties in which he made his rounds—the women for his gossip and songs, the men for his news and usefulness, the bairns for his fantastic stories about witches, and brownies, and fairies. He carried letters and parcels from neighbour to neighbour ; and although he rarely had a shilling of his own in his pocket, he was frequently trusted by the farmers of the out-

lying districts with large sums of money to deposit in the village bank. Drunk or sober, Habbie was never known to make a mistake in those monetary transactions.

He made his way to Dalmahoy, and inquired for Maister Walter, but that gentleman was absent.

"I ken'd that fine," said Habbie, "but I just came to please the leddy. I ken where to find him. Would you no like to buy my new ballant, my braw lass? It's about the bonny leddy o' the Dee. She was just a quean like yoursel', and she was guid and bonnie as you are, and she married the laird's strapping son, and sae became the leddy o' his houses and lands."

"There's waur nor me has married a laird's son," said the lass, with a toss of the head and a twinkle in her eye.


"And that's true enough," said Habbie, nodding gravely, "for thae een of yours would tempt the duke himsel', let alone a laird's loon."

“None o’ your havers!” cried she, blushing and pleased, as she bought the ballad.

After this stroke of business Habbie rode on to the Norlan’ Head, singing or brooding by the way, just as the humour seized him.

CHAPTER XV.

STRATAGEM.

“ND what should the Laird want with me?” exclaimed Teenie, inclined to resent the somewhat authoritative message inviting her to Dalma-hoy.

“He didna say,” was Drysdale’s response, sitting in the gig, bolt upright and grim, “but I suppose he’ll tell you when you get there.”

He unbuttoned the leather apron at her side, and waited as if for her to jump in.

She hesitated—why, she could not tell—then she got her bonnet and shawl, and took the seat beside Drysdale. Ailie was proud of this new token of the Laird’s regard, and

called her a "saucy ted" for thinking of saying no to the invitation.

Drysdale said, "It's a fine afternoon."

Teenie said, "Yes."

Drysdale : "Grand weather for the crops."

Teenie : "Yes."

That was all the conversation. He was a man who spoke little, except on occasions when he had reached his sixth tumbler, and then he became loquacious about the "panoramy" and his Canadian experiences. She was at this moment in a somewhat fierce mood. Although she could not define the real reason, her spirit had rebelled at the air of patronage with which Dalmahoy had treated them on his visit to the cottage; and she had felt even more rebellious at the plain message delivered by Drysdale, "The Laird wants to see you immediately."

Had it not been for the visit, she might have interpreted the message as Ailie did—as another mark of favour. But she could not do that. She fretted and felt angry

whilst she complied. She wished that Walter or her father had been within reach, as either might have saved her a good deal of vexatious wonderings.

Habbie Gowk had taken a short cut across the moor, and so he missed Teenie, or the letter he carried might have enlightened and encouraged her.

As she drove up to the big house, she had an uncomfortable feeling that her plain shawl and bonnet, and her homely dress, were sadly out of keeping with the grandeur of this place, of which by-and-by she was to be the mistress. She would have liked to go round the other way, and to get in quietly by the back door. But Drysdale, acting upon instructions, drove up to the main entrance.

The groom took the horse's head; Drysdale and the footman offered their assistance to Teenie in descending, with a sort of stiff civility, as if she had been some lady of importance; but she ignored their proffered services, and sprang lightly to the ground.

She was conducted across the big hall, and there again she felt a shrinking sensation, as if there were something discordant about herself in association with this place. But that only made her feel the more fierce and bold in her outward bearing.

Dalmahoy received her in the drawing-room, a long narrow apartment, with high roof and heavy panels of oak, and crowded with dark, stiff-backed furniture. It was an ancient, cold, and gloomy room, the furniture of which seemed to have been arranged by some painfully correct law of rule and compass. Every chair, table, and lounge stood as if nailed to its place, each at an exact distance from the other, looking as if it never had been moved from its spot, and was never intended to be moved.

Poor Teenie felt inclined to shiver as with cold when the door was thrown open, and she was ushered into this uncomfortable-looking chamber.

The Laird advanced with the most stately

manner imaginable, quite in keeping with his surroundings, took her hand, and conducted her to a seat. She yielded, notwithstanding the wild desire which possessed her to turn and fly. She felt more and more chilled, more and more conscious of the incongruity between herself and this, to her eyes, awfully grand place.

The Laird had wickedly calculated upon making an impression of this kind, and he mentally congratulated himself upon the success of his scheme so far. He was painfully courteous in his manner of leading her across the room, as if she had been a lady of royal blood; she felt as if he were mocking her as he bowed low when she sat down on the couch and expressed in a soft respectful tone the extreme pleasure he experienced in receiving her at Dalmahoy.

Teenie would have cried with vexation, only that was one of the arts of young-ladyism she had never acquired. So she only sat staring at him, somewhat fierce

in herself, and wondering what it all meant.

He asked how she had been since their meeting; inquired for her father, and for his "good friend" Alison.

"What was it you wanted to see me for?" interrupted Teenie with her disagreeable frankness.

The Laird was staggered for an instant, but he was equal to the occasion, and with corresponding frankness he answered—

"Thank you, Christina; your honest nature relieves me of much difficulty. Now with ordinary ladies I would not have known how to approach the unhappy subject upon which I must speak to you; but you relieve me at once."

She did not know whether that was a compliment or not; but she nodded, and said—

"All right—go on."

Thought the Laird: "Good heavens, how coarse!"

Said the Laird: "Thank you again, Chris-

tina ; and I will imitate your charming frankness by telling you what I want without the least circumlocution. It is about Walter."

"Yes," she said, very meekly now.

He drew a chair forward, seated himself facing her, and spoke in a quite confidential manner.

"You know he is very young ; he is passionate, and not easily guided. It is therefore necessary that I, who have more than a father's affection for him, and knowing how poor I shall leave him"—he glanced round the room and at her, as if he could not expect her to understand how he, the master of that place, could be poor—"it is necessary, I say, that I should look anxiously to his future, and endeavour to save him, so far as in me lies, from the consequences of his own folly."

"Surely any father would do the same."

The Laird was staggered again, and again he rose equal to the occasion.

"My dear Christina, I cannot expect you to enter quite into my views at once ; but let

me tell you, most fathers would leave an obstinate son to pay the penalty of his own blunders. I, however, wish to make the way of the future smooth for my son ; and I wish to spare him the humiliation of being the destroyer of an old and much-respected house."

He was so grand, and he was so sincere, that she could only say in a dazed way—

"Yes."

"Well then, let me take things in their due order—it is most painful to me, and it will vex you; but I believe you love Walter."

She moved uneasily ; she drew breath with difficulty, and her eyes flashed upon him savagely. That was a matter he had no right to touch upon.

"Hear me," he pleaded very humbly, and that held her fast to the seat. "It is because I know you like him so much that I have asked you to come here, that I might beg] of you to save him from the ruin of all

his prospects, from the toil and misery which he must endure if———”

The Laird made a grand pause, which he expected to be effective. She only said in a quiet way—

“Very well, go on.”

“If he marries you!”

She jumped up.

“Please hear me—it is for his sake,” he pleaded again, catching her hand and pressing her back upon the seat. “I am going to confess to you something that will make me appear very mean in your eyes, but it is for his sake. When I consented to your marriage, I believed that you were the heiress of the great Methven estate. I like you, I respect you, but—I will be perfectly honest—that was why I consented to the marriage; but for that mistake I would have refused my sanction as much for your sake as for his. You know that Grace Wishart loves him; she has wealth, and only you stand between them. That is why I have asked you to

come here, that I might beg you to save me from remorse, which will make my few remaining years miserable—to beg you to save him from—from what must be an unhappy union. Will you help me?”

“In what way?”

“By refusing to marry him.”

“Did he know about this fortune you thought I was to get?”

The Laird hesitated, and then he told a lie—

“Yes.”

She was standing up, very cold, frowning, and scornful.

“And does he wish you to say this to me?”

Dalmahoy also rose, agitated, hesitating, doubtful how far he might go without bringing upon himself open disgrace. He was on the point of telling another lie—for he saw that she was ready to yield—when a man stepped between them with one word, full of pity, shame, and reproach.

“Father !”

It was Walter. He had entered unobserved by either party, in the excitement of the conversation. He had overheard the last two or three sentences, and he guessed the rest : they were full of bitterness and shame to him.

He put his arm round Teenie, and kissed her tenderly.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHADOWS.



HE position was awkward, and there was silence for a minute. The Laird swung his glasses in pendulum fashion and regarded the others innocently, like a man who is aware that his conduct is liable to misconstruction, but whose conscious rectitude sustains him in the hour of trial; he was wishing he could discover whether or not Walter had heard that little fib, and he was in a manner glad that the second one had not been uttered.

Walter had heard it.

Teenie drew back a step, putting his arm away from her, looking at him with those clear, far-seeing eyes of hers. She saw that

he was very calm, although his face was pale. It was said of him by his brothers and sisters that he was most resolute and most unmanageable when he was quietest. But she was looking farther. She was striving to get a glimpse of that future which Dalmahoy had represented in such dismal colours. She was striving to discover what it was right for her to do after the appeal just made to her. Was she to ruin his prospects? Was she to make him unhappy? Was she to risk that?

Her heart craved for him in such a wild passionate way that she was ready to dare anything—but not if he were to suffer by it. She had never known anything approaching to fear until now, and she did fear; but it was for him, not herself. Slowly the sense of the utter change in herself dawned upon her; but how quickly the change had been effected! Her very love was the source of her new-born cowardice.

Was it the mistake about that fortune which had tempted him to speak? And was

he going on with the engagement out of pity for her? She could and would do anything because she loved him, but she would not have anything for pity.

She put the thought—or suspicion—into words, and asked him—

“Were you thinking about the siller when you made me so glad?”

He took her hand, pressing it warmly. She could not doubt that his heart was in his words.

“You are my fortune,” he said smiling.

He was ambiguous, but he could not tell her that his father had stooped to a falsehood.

“But the Laird says——”

He held up his hand, stopping her.

“My father is very kind to me; he is only anxious that I may have a successful career. You must not blame him, or be angry with him, if he has said anything to vex you. I have been up at Drumliemount to-day, and the cottage will soon be ready for us.”

Teenie had nothing more to say.

“Very well, Walter,” said the Laird in an injured tone; “I have done my best to save you, and Christina would have helped me, but for you. I wash my hands of the whole affair from this day forth; and all I have to say is that, whatever happens, you cannot blame me. I regret having interfered.”

Dalmahoy bade Teenie good-bye, somewhat pompously but kindly, and marched out of the room, glad enough to escape without any exposure, whilst he was satisfied that he had been doing only his duty.

“I wish I knew what to do,” exclaimed Teenie.

“There is nothing for you to do but to get ready for our wedding, and to prepare yourself to settle down into the humdrum ways of the wife of a poor country minister.”

“You say that just to please me.”

“Of course I do, for in pleasing you I please myself.”

She was not satisfied, but she could not

argue with him. He proposed that she should see his sisters. He had told them of the marriage, and they were most anxious to congratulate the bride.

“No,” said Teenie very decisively, “I will see no more of your folk to-day. I want to get back to the Norlan’.”

She almost shuddered as she glanced from one end of the long dark room to the other. The shafts of light which penetrated it through the three high and narrow windows, served only to make the shadowy recesses and corners appear the more gloomy. “There should be fires here,” was her mechanical reflection ; her thoughts were far away from the subject.

He was sorry, but he did not attempt to persuade her ; she had been too much tried and agitated already. He got the gig and himself drove her home. She was glad to have him with her, glad to feel that he was near her, although she scarcely spoke a word.

They found the skipper, telescope in hand,

trying to make out the character of a brig which was passing far out at sea; Alison standing at the door knitting, and listening to Habbie Gowk, who, seated on a tub which he had turned upside down for that purpose, was busy explaining the comparative merits of Dorking and Brahma-poutra hens as egg-layers.

“There they are!” he cried, jumping up and almost knocking Alison over the doorstep in his excitement. “I ken’d I would find them together. They’re a braw pair. They were just made for ither.”

He hobbled forward as Teenie alighted.

“I wish you muckle joy, hinny, and a lang life,” he said heartily. Then in an undertone, as if it were a secret of deepest importance, “I’m going to make the best ballant that I ever made for your wadding.”

“Hoots!” cried Teenie, and was passing into the house—rather displeased than otherwise to discover that her marriage was already the common talk of the town and

district—when Habbie begged her to wait a minute. After pulling out several bundles of his songs, scraps of dirty paper, and bits of cord, he at last found the letters.

“That one’s for you, and that for you, sir—from Miss Wishart.”

Grace again! Teenie was ready to crumple the letter in her hand without reading it. Somehow Grace’s name confronted her at every turn, and made her feel angry without the slightest apparent reason. Walter was already reading his letter, and she could see that it pleased him very much, for he was smiling—admiration and gratitude in the smile.

Teenie went into the house.

“You ha’e gotten the brawest lass in the twa counties, sir—and the best, if you only guide her right.”

“I’ll try, Habbie, thank you,” said Walter with a short laugh; but he did not feel so light of heart as he had done a few days ago. That question of guiding her right—

of guiding himself right—was a very serious one.

Teenie was up in her room reading the letter ; it was full of kindly, generous thoughts. It told her that the writer was coming to see her, to offer help in the arrangements for the wedding ; warned her that she was not to be distressed if she found the Dalmahoy family a little cold at first, and implored her to think of Grace Wishart as her true and devoted friend under all circumstances.

If Teenie had only got that letter before her interview with the Laird, she would have been pleased by it ; she would have appreciated the unselfish nature of the writer, and she would not have been so much depressed by the scene at Dalmahoy. But receiving it now !—she felt pity in every word, and she hated pity. She did not want to be pitied by anybody, and least of all by her ! She was inclined to resent the letter as an intentional affront, and yet she could not forget

the brave self-sacrificing spirit of Grace ; she could not forget the affectionate welcome she had received from her ; and she could not doubt her truth. But all this upset Teenie, and put her out of humour. She had been accustomed to find things so straight and plain in the life she had hitherto led, that she could not understand people saying one thing and meaning another ; and yet that was what the Laird had done. Radiating from him, all the world seemed to be condemning her for agreeing to become Walter's wife. Well, why did they not say it outright, and let her understand the position ? She liked Dalmahoy for one thing—he had spoken plainly at last. But sniffs, and sneers, and foreboding shakes of heads, she could not understand them, and she hated the people who used them.

She had cried out to Walter, " I wish I knew what to do."

In her blunt way she pulled herself up, and asked the question—

“Wouldn't it be best just to say that I'll not have him?”

And so end it all. End it all?—how her poor heart trembled at that! and how blank and weary the whole world looked under that light! If she could only reach that something beyond the present life, that mysterious something for which she had so often looked far across the sea, which she never found, and never yet realized in her own mind, she might have ended it all. But he had come and told her of his love, and that had seemed to be the something for which she had been craving, until these doubts and warnings made her sensible that she had not yet attained the mysterious something for which she yearned; yet her heart craved for him, and she could not give him up.

She would not give him up. The fierce spirit which rebelled against everything like coercion, rose within her, and she resolved to marry him in spite of every opposition and counsel. Then came the meekness, and, to

her, strange cowardice, when she thought of him, and of the Laird's words, that he would ruin all his future prospects if he should marry her.

If he should marry her! It was very hard for her who loved him so, to decide how to act, when he was so persistent in declaring that his whole happiness lay in her hands, that she alone could make his future bright and prosperous.

What did he mean, if it was not what she wished him to mean? She beat her hands helplessly against the air; she cried for guidance and for help; and then the burthen of the old song returned to her—she loved him, and she could not give him up.

All this time Walter was waiting patiently to see her before he should return home.

“Don't think anything about what my father said,” he whispered to her when she came to him; “it is his anxiety to see me comfortably placed that made him speak. We'll go up and see the house to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XVII.

DRUMLIEMOUNT.



HEY walked up the hill together, towards the little squat gray church at the top. There was still a shadow lying across Teenie's heart, and the brightness of the day did not dispel it. She tried to hide it from him, and failed. Walter was making an honest effort to win her back to the old free and fearless nature.

Above them, a pale blue sky, diversified by mountains of fleece, fringed with bright silver; behind them, the sea, glistening white and green, heaving gently, and singing its song, which is always merry or sad according to the humour of the listener; the scrambling houses of Rowanden, and the ever-changing

group of men, women, and children on the shore ; the wind sweeping up with its salt savour from the sea, and whistling coldly in their ears.

Before them, a yellow tortuous road, hedge-bound, and winding over a hill that would have been bleak and barren, but for the small plantation of firs and evergreens growing around the manse—planted there to protect the house from the sharp blasts of “the Razor.”

The cottage which the new minister was to occupy was on the opposite side of the road to the old manse, surrounded by a thick hedge and a few evergreens, but unprotected by any trees, except a few apple-trees in the garden at the back. But it was a pretty place, of modern construction, and with many conveniences : it had been erected by a retired officer, who had lived only a few years to enjoy his residence. It faced the sea, and the front wall was covered with roses and honey-suckle.

The lovers walked leisurely upward. Walter made fun of the winding road and the hill, playfully telling her that it was an emblem of their future career—always a toil up-hill towards home ; but he would be quite contented if he might walk always hand-in-hand with her as they were doing now.

“Are you sure you will always be content with that?” she said, looking at him quickly.

“Sure?”—he was going to answer lightly, but he saw that she was very earnest ; and so he spoke gravely and tenderly : “As sure, Teenie, as a man can be of anything in his own nature. I cannot foresee, because I cannot understand, any change in my views on this subject. This is what I desire, this is what I seek—a simple life with you and my books, trying to do well ourselves, and trying to help others to accept life and its troubles humbly, hopefully, and gratefully.”

“Did your father say anything more about—about me?”

He did not like the question; but he answered it frankly.

“Yes, he took me to task again last night, and repeated a number of unpleasant counsels and possibilities which are no doubt true enough to him, but they are not true at all to me.”

“Why?”

“Because we look at things from entirely different points of view.”

Silence. He did not think it necessary to tell her *how* his father had spoken of her and of the engagement.

“It is all very well just now,” the Laird had said, “the heat of enthusiasm and calf-love is upon you. But I tell you, I know what the world is, I know what human nature is, and you will repent. You will be sorry for having despised my counsel, when it is too late. We have not got into the millenium yet; and human nature is much the same to-day as it was yesterday, and will be to-morrow. You think I do not understand

your character ; but I do, better than yourself. You are as ambitious as the devil, and six months hence you will find this girl a weight upon your wings, utterly preventing your rising from the ground, and you will hate her. What do you say to that ?”

“ I would say that, in regard to us, it is extraordinary ” (smiling incredulously).

“ Much worse—it’s true,” said Dalmahoy, sharply. “ However, you know my principles ; I have bothered myself more than usual over this affair. I don’t like to be annoyed, and I won’t be annoyed by it any more. Do as you please, only don’t blame me. I have done my best to save you ; I have asked Grace, and she refused to help me ; I have asked the girl herself, and she refuses, which she would not have done if she had cared for you in the ridiculous way you fancy.”

“ She acted very bravely and honestly, sir ; she would have yielded to you but for me.”

“ Quite so ; I have nothing to say against her. I have done with the whole affair.

Only there's a lesson I have learned from it—one is never too old to learn—and by which you may profit in your new career."

"Yes, sir."

"It is that Methven affair which has taught me the lesson—believe nothing that you hear, and only half what you see; and then there will be a chance of your getting on comfortably through the world without offending your neighbours."

With that sententious utterance the Laird dropped the whole affair, and satisfied that he was duly consulting the greatest happiness of the greatest number—he as usual being in the majority—he turned to his own enjoyment.

Walter could not repeat all this selfish counsel to her. He opened the little wooden gate, and they entered the precincts of their future home. The workmen were busy in the house, painting, papering, and carpentering. The grandchildren of the old bed-ridden minister, whose place Walter was to take, attracted by the bustle, were romping about

the empty house. One chubby little fellow was standing near the doorway with a yellow basin and a clay pipe, earnestly blowing soap-bubbles to his own intense delight, and occasionally cheered by the approval of his brothers and sisters when they happened to be near him in the course of their game of hide-and-seek.

This was to be the parlour and dining-room ; that was to be the drawing-room, with the window opening to the garden ; and here in the corner, with the two windows, one to the road and the other to the garden, was to be his study. Upstairs were the bed-rooms, small but cosy. And so on.

After they had explored the house, and acknowledged the grinning salutations of the workmen, they went out to the garden. Behind the house they had a good piece of ground for potatoes and cabbages ; and if they required more, the neighbouring field might be rented. In front there was a fair space of grass for bleaching and croquet, and

as much space for flowers as they were likely to require.

They sat down, she on a garden roller, he on the edge of a wheelbarrow. Before them, the slope of the hill and the glistening sea; behind them, the rose-covered cottage, and the little fellow blowing his soap-bubbles.

“We will be very happy here, Teenie; don’t you think so?”

Up went a bubble, wavering in the inconstant wind, gleaming with all the colours of the rainbow—then suddenly falling upon the ground, a drop of soap and water.

“Ay, Walter, I hope so” (she used to call him Wattie in the old days of childhood).

“You see that tower there” (pointing to the stunted square tower of the church, with its wooden slits to admit air and to let out the sound of the bell); “well, when the bell calls the fisher-folk up from Rowanden, and the farmer-folk from across the moors, I want to teach them to come gladly as to a merry feast, and you will help me to do that.”

Up went another bubble, “Eh, but that’s a fine one!” cried the child.

“I’ll do what I can, but I’m no sure that I can be of much use to you.”

Her eyes were gazing into his so anxiously ; she did not know how she was to help him in the work he seemed to be so bent upon, but she wished to help him, and that was everything.

“I picture to myself such a glorious life, with you beside me, always ready to cheer me when my heart fails, always inspiring me with new courage and hope when I am, in my weakness, inclined to falter and halt.”

“Bonnier an’ bonnier, bigger an’ bigger!” cried the child as another bubble, larger than the others, went up, and his companions cheered its bright ascent.

“But it’s out already,” cried one of the children, with much disappointment and reprimand in the tone.

“I couldna help that,” cries the bubble-blower ; “look at this one!”

"Of course, we must expect to have trials and difficulties to overcome; nobody can escape them," Walter went on; "but we'll try to make them light to each other by sharing them bravely, and by feeling that our love endures, although everything else should fail us."

"Tsha! that's no a guid one ava," exclaimed the audience of the bubble-blower.

Her eyes were fixed upon him, the clear truth and love that was in her heart shining like sunlight on her face, and filling his soul with gracious hope and pleasure.

"You may be sure of that," said Teenie, in a very low voice.

"That's grand!" cried the chorus of children as another big bubble floated up gently and disappeared in the air. That was the most successful of the experiments yet made.

"Heaven bless you, Teenie, for those words," he said fervently; "it is not easy for a man to oppose all who care for him, and

who cannot wish anything but his well-being ; yet I have been obliged to do that, and I have been glad and proud to do it for your sake. But it is an immense relief and satisfaction to know that you are content, and that you are resolved to brave all the dangers of the future with me."

"You're making a botch o't," ejaculated one of the boys ; "let me ha'e a try."

Teenie looked toward the sea ; she was remembering the angry thoughts which filled her mind yesterday. Was she content ? She did not know. She felt nothing but that she wished to be his wife—that she would be devoted to him whatever happened, and she could not realize any of the trials and difficulties to which he alluded.

"You'll wonder at what I am going to say, Walter ; but last night it came to me, and I cannot get the notion out of my head," she said, looking straight at him. "Grace Wishart was brave, and set you free when she saw that it was best for you ; ought not I to

do the same, when I see that it would be best for you ?”

He was startled by this proposal, made so quietly and with apparently such mature consideration.

“ But you cannot see that,” he exclaimed ; “ the positions are entirely different ; you would destroy, not help me, if you were to forsake me.”

“ I wish I was sure of that,” she answered, dreamily, again gazing towards the restless sea.

The boys were sending up the bubbles in quick succession ; they flashed an instant many colours in the delighted eyes of the children, and then went out.

“ You cannot wish to make me miserable.”

“ No ” (as before).

“ You cannot wish to make me turn away from all the hopes I have cherished—from the work I have dreamed of doing, with you beside me to help and cheer me. You cannot wish that, and that is what would happen

if you were to leave me.—I would think the whole world bad, and life not worth having.”

His voice was subdued ; but there was deep passion in his tone—in his face and his eyes—as he bent toward her.

“ I will never leave you, Walter, until I feel sure that you will be happier without me—that is what made me think of it ; but I’m no sure that I would have been able to do it, even if you wanted me.”

She smiled at her own weakness ; and he was proud of it. He would have hugged her on the spot, but he was checked in time by a blithe shout from the children.

“ Then we’ll not speak any more about these unpleasant things. We’ll just be sensible, and set quietly about our arrangements, and we’ll settle down into a douce cozy couple before the honeymoon is out.”

“ But your folk are so set against me——”

“ Hush !—you must not think that ; besides, you are going to marry only me, not all my folk.”

“But that fortune the Laird thought I was to have?”

“For my sake, Teenie, don’t let me hear another word about that fortune, or it will drive me out of my wits, as I think it has done half the people of the county. What is it to us? we want nothing but one another, and, having that, all the money in the world cannot add to our happiness, or take away from it.”

There was such a beautiful bubble went up at that moment; the bairns hurrahed and danced with pleasure, and watched it till it disappeared.

He made her so happy, because he told her just what she wanted to believe; and at the moment she really thought that her doubts were satisfactorily answered—that the future was made plain to her, a long life of loving companionship, full of joy because their love was so sure and true. What indeed should she care whether the Dalmahoy folk were set against her or not? she had nothing to do

with them. Grace Wishart, who was good and brave and generous, was her friend; and had told her that she was right; why then should she think of anything but the bright sunshine that was falling upon her? Why should she hear anything but blithe songs in the minstrelsy of the birds around her, and in the distant roar of the sea which the wind carried up the height, modulated and harmonized by its journey.

She found new pleasure in looking round the place which was to be her home—in settling various details of arrangement, and in trying to remember the countless little odds and ends which would be requisite for prudent and thrifty housekeeping.

They went into the house to pay their respects to old Mr. Geddie; but this was one of his bad days, and his widowed daughter—mother of the bubble-blowers—who was his housekeeper, thought they had better not see him.

So they went down the hill together. The

complexion of everything and everybody had changed to Teenie since she had gone up to Drumliemount. She was so happy that all the world seemed gay, and Walter the best and bravest gentleman that ever lived.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT FOLK SAID.



HE preparations for the wedding proceeded briskly; but the event was (happily for those most concerned) deprived of much of the importance it would have obtained in local eyes, by the excitement prevailing in reference to the Methven fortune.

The news of the million which had been left heirless, had dropped like a bomb-shell into the quiet life of Kingshaven and Rowanden, burst, and spread frenzy, enmity, and bitterness of heart around. Claims the most absurd were suddenly discovered and advanced; relationships were made out in the most ingenious fashion; and even trivial ser-

vices rendered to the deceased were suggested as titles to a share in the enormous wealth he had left.

Men and women, hitherto contented and happy with what they possessed, became inspired with feverish excitement, utterly dissatisfied with their lot, and ready to stake their last penny in the effort to win the Methven fortune.

If George Methven had devoted all his genius to discover how he might most severely punish those who had been harsh and unkind to him in his youth, he could not have formed a more successful plan than that of dying without a will.

The provost quarrelled with the bailies, the bailies with the councillors, and the wives fomented the disturbance, besides getting up a pretty ado on their own account as to their respective claims. The humbler classes were not behind their superiors ; hard-working fishers, sturdy tradesmen, joined the halloo, forsaking honest work for that purpose, and

paying the penalty in hunger and a vexed spirit.

The Methven family had suddenly become as large as that of Adam himself. Old friendships were broken off; family ties only rendered disputes the more bitter; faces which had been jovial became eager and suspicious; hearts which had been open to charitable and kindly thoughts were closed against all comers. Honest, God-fearing people, who had been always ready to help a neighbour in distress, became spiteful and vicious, each blaming the other for advancing groundless claims to the property, and so confusing the title of the rightful heir, who was always the person making the charge.

The fortune had brought a curse upon them, and rich and poor alike were unhappy in their eagerness to clutch it.

The lawyers smiled, and made hay whilst the sun shone; they warned their clients of the hopelessness of their claims; but the

clients paid the fees, and insisted upon the investigations and appeals proceeding.

"Did you ever hear the like of that?" cried Mrs. Dubbieside, flopping down on the sofa; "they say that the girl Thorston is the heiress, and she is to marry Dalmahoy's son on the strength of it!"

"I'm glad somebody has been found to heir it, for I'm sick of the whole affair," returned the provost, who was fond of peace, and had been very much badgered in regard to this subject. Eager as he was to have a share of the money, he had been so tormented about it, that he was coming round to the sensible conclusion that a man with his carriage and lamps should despise and keep clear of the squabbles which were raging throughout the district.

Mrs. Dubbieside's fat person shook all over with indignation.

"You give me a dreadful stitch—you're such a coward, Dubbieside!"

"Maybe."

“ I wouldn’t be surprised if you meant to give in ; yet you know that your mother was Jean Methven’s aunt, and what claim could be clearer ? ”

“ We’ll see what the lawyers say.”

But whatever doubts the provost might feel at home, he showed none of them abroad.

“ The provost’s an ass,” growled Dr. Lumsden, the bailie ; “ he pretends to think he has a chance, when he knows that my grandmother was full cousin on her father’s side to the auld wifie Methven. Let them come nearer than that if they can.”

And so the strife went on ; and the only interest felt in regard to Teenie’s marriage was inspired by the question, was she or was she not the heiress to the Methven fortune ? The ladies of course found time to express their amazement that young Dalmahoy should have chosen such a wife.

“ A wild thing, utterly uneducated, and

cannot play the piano!" exclaimed the banker's partner, thinking of her own three daughters, who had acquired three accomplishments at an Aberdeen boarding-school.

"I dare say he will think himself lucky if she should turn out to be the heiress," said Mrs. Brunton.

"Her the heiress!—it's perfect nonsense to mention it!"

"As like her as anybody, for it seems that it all depends upon the kinship with the man's mother."

"Take my word for it, the Thorstons will not get it," and Mrs. Shaw nodded as if she knew more than she cared to tell. The banker's lady had acquired a reputation for sagacity at a very cheap rate—she predicted the failure of everything and everybody, and as there are so many more failures than successes in the world, she was able to say, "I told you so," much more frequently than her neighbours. She now predicted not only that Teenie would not get the fortune, but

also that "she had no qualification for a minister's wife."

Mrs. Brunton failed to see why the fact of her not being able to play the piano should be so fatal to the girl's future, and with much self-satisfaction she remarked—

"There's more folk than Thorston's lass cannot play the piano, and live very well for all that."

It was a cruel joke, for Mrs. Shaw had not the least sense of music, and had once mistaken "*Tullochgorum*" for a psalm tune.

Interest in the marriage was vastly quickened when, thanks to the charming widow Smyllie, it became known that Dalmahoy was opposed to the match. Report said he was to forbid the banns, and to disinherit his son. The falsehood of the report gave it relish ; it spread, and magnified as it spread. Details of a dreadful scene between the Laird and Walter were confidentially exchanged at tea-tables and supper-parties. The subject had a special value at that time,

for it afforded the honest folk a space of ground upon which they might be agreeable, however much they might wrangle over the question of the Methven heirship.

At Rowanden, the fishers, men and women, were every one on Teenie's side; even the young fellows, who might have felt some envy in losing all hope of winning the prize themselves, joined her cause, and proclaimed her the brawest lady in the county. She would have been just the right sort of wife, they thought, for one of the old Norse kings, who used to sail the seas so bravely that the legends of their prowess stimulated the youths with courage, and inspired in them a fierce spirit of enterprise, which often told with good effect upon a night's fishing when storms rose dauntingly.

This scandal was very bad for the young minister, and he heard enough of it to make him smart keenly. Enthusiastic, earnest, seeing in the work he had undertaken great possibilities for the noblest efforts a man can

make, the fact of being the subject of petty gossip was extremely disagreeable to him. That it was false afforded him little comfort, for he knew that a man entering upon grave duties, such as his were to be, would lose much of the influence he should possess if his name were bandied about as that of one who had acted perversely or foolishly, according to the world's estimate of conduct.

Skipper Dan had not yet made up his mind whether to be pleased or sorry. In his own way he grinned over the "clashes" which were going about. The marriage-day was fixed, the preparations for it were progressing steadily; whatever folk might say—and folk would always say something—could not alter that fact.

Rough, uncouth giant that he was, nobody could guess the woman's tenderness with which he regarded his child, and so nobody could understand that Dan was not thinking at all about the grand match his daughter was

making, but only about the difference there would be at the Norlan' Head.

"She wishes for't," he kept muttering to himself; that was the one idea he had grasped when first astounded by the Laird's consent, and he clung to it as if it were the only sure thing he could find.

As the day drew near he thought much about the whaling expedition he proposed to make.

The only person who was thoroughly happy in the arrangements for the forthcoming event was Ailie. She was never done praising the old and the young Dalmahoy, and promising to the bride a long and prosperous life. To her the preparations afforded a ventilation for much suppressed energy. The grand dresses and their trimmings were sources of great joy; the "providing"—which is the bride's contribution to the effects of the future household, and in Scotland a most important affair, including linen, blankets, &c.—was to Ailie a supreme pleasure.

The woman was as vain and proud as if Teenie had been her own child ; and she was determined that Dan Thorston's lass should go to her husband with as extensive a providing as even the provost's daughter could hope to have. So, from morning till night she was busy : pawky to those who might be expected to give presents ; extremely civil to those who brought them ; sharp and contemptuous to those who failed to pay this mark of respect.

Teenie looked on, helped a little, objected a great deal : then laughed, and submitted.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BRIDAL EVE.



EENIE was restless and inconstant, now singing as blithely as a bird, by-and-by silent, gloomy, and fretful—she did not know why. She was going to marry the only man she ever cared for—that made her happy. But, on the other hand, there were weary, vague forebodings, threatening her married life with sorrow—that made her sad and irritable. And she did not know why! She would not think of that silly book of fate about which Walter had seemed so vexed; she could not think that Grace had anything to do with this uncomfortable feeling, and she did not like to think that the Laird's blunder or the folk's

clashes could be the cause of her uneasiness.

The Laird had said he would not attend the marriage, but being reminded of his guiding principle, he had half agreed to Walter, and was wholly decided in his own mind, to attend, in order to stifle gossip, and to have the opportunity of making a speech. He was always ready to sacrifice himself to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and he thoroughly believed that he was always doing so.

The Laird's family numbered four daughters and three sons. Their positions in the register of the family Bible stood in this order :—

Helen—Miss Burnett—age, something under forty. She was tall, had a long neck, a long head, and very sharp, pinched-like features ; very thin hair. She professed an utter contempt for matrimony ; she was in fact almost viciously eager to be married under any circumstances. Whenever she heard of the marriage of any of those youths

and maidens whom she had known as children, her customary exclamation was "How funny!" That was a general phrase of hers, uttered without the least meaning of tone or look, no matter how grave might be the subject of conversation. Indeed, she frequently contrived to startle people by using it on the most inappropriate occasions. She was beginning to feel that she must give up hope, and she fell back upon the consolatory thought that she had been too exacting in her earlier days, or that no man had appeared worthy to win her.

Alice—a giddy young thing of thirty-five, held in severe subjection by her elder sister, who deemed restraint necessary to save her from conduct which would be very foolish, if not wicked. Helen was very fond of her all the time she condemned her giddiness.

Agnes Mary—quiet and studious, disposed to deep depression of spirits, owing to religious fears, and self-doubts as to her acceptance amongst the elect.

Walter.

Jane—a dark, cheery little creature, who always saw the silver lining of every cloud.

Archibald—a sturdy fellow, who had studied agriculture, and was now a coffee-planter at Ceylon.

Colin—a shy youth, who was spending a few months at home, previous to beginning work as clerk in a London bank.

The members of the family at home during this crisis were Miss Burnett, Alice, and Colin.

Miss Burnett at first positively refused to see the future bride, but at length—whether yielding to natural curiosity, or to the tears and prayers of the “giddy young thing,” Alice, who was ready to hug and kiss and weep over anybody who was going to be married—she agreed to visit the Norlan’ Head, and her future sister-in-law.

“How funny! I suppose we must show some regard to this fisher-girl for poor Walter’s sake,” she said.

She always spoke of her brother as "poor" Walter.

Teenie received them civilly, but without the least pretence of affection, which was rather disappointing to Alice, who was prepared to go into ecstasies over her new relative, as she would have been over anything new—the more strange it might be, the greater would be her delight.

"I am so glad to have a new sister," she cried, embracing her.

But Teenie shrank back; Alice stood in dumb amazement at her unsympathetic manner, and Miss Burnett exclaimed severely—

"Alice, you are much too demonstrative."

Alice recovered herself, and looking pleadingly at her sister—

"But she is so bonnie. I don't wonder at Walter being in love with her, and I shall be so fond of her."

Teenie felt a little annoyed, for they spoke of her as if she were some curiosity, or some

wild animal exhibited for their entertainment.

“Can we do anything to assist you, Christina, in your arrangements?” said Helen, secretly eager to have some insight into the preparations of a young lady for the married state; and although the offer was made in her grimly polite way, she really meant it kindly.

“Oh! do let us help you,” cried Alice; “I would like it so much.”

“I see no way that you can help me,” answered Teenie, smiling faintly, and blushing, while her heart warmed towards Alice; “there is nothing to do.”

“How funny!” ejaculated Helen. “I thought you would have been overwhelmed with so many things to do.”

“What kind of dress are you to wear?” asked Alice; “is it to be white?—and have you got any lace?—I am so fond of real lace.”

“I don’t know yet,” answered the bride,

disposed to laugh at this enthusiasm about a matter to which she had given little attention.

“Don’t know yet!—oh, dear! what a strange body you must be. I have thought ever so many times of how I should be dressed, and how I should stand, and how I would answer the minister. I’ve gone over it in fancy a hundred times, and the only thing I have not been able to realize is the man. You see nobody wants to marry me.”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” said Helen severely, having a fear that the credit of the Dalmahoy family was being sacrificed by her sister.

“But it isn’t nonsense, Nellie, or I’d have been married half a dozen times at least.”

“You are such a giddy young thing, Alice.” That was the usual termination of their little disputes.

Teenie showed them her “braws”—dresses, presents, and providing. Miss Burnett was dignified, but expressed gracious approval of all she saw. Alice was in ecsta-

sies of admiration ; she began to look upon Teenie with a humble kind of awe, as one who was about to pass into the perfect state of womanhood.

Both sisters left the house with a much higher opinion of their brother's bride than they had entertained previously. But Helen could not resist the temptation to be silyly satirical when she selected as her gift a pair of silver fish-carvers.

Grace had been with her several times—not often ; and yet she seemed to be always at hand when help or advice was needed—very quiet, gentle, and always with that smile which was all the more tender because of the shade of sorrow lying behind it. She seemed to be gradually winning Teenie to forget that story Walter had told her—to forget the peculiar position in which they stood towards each other and towards him.

Only there were quick flashes of Teenie's eyes upon the pale face of her friend when she thought the latter did not see, and these

glances suggested that Teenie was not forgetting, but remembering the more acutely, the more the other's devotion was revealed to her.

The day previous to the marriage : afternoon. Grace and Ailie had persuaded Teenie to try on her wedding-dress (the first time), and she was standing in the middle of the little room, face flushed, eyes bright, heart beating quickly, and conscious of an uncomfortable feeling that she was far too grand.

"You look beautiful," said Grace simply.

"She does that," echoed Ailie, standing with arms crossed, and each hand clutching an elbow ; "there's an auld fisher by-word that we say to lads when they're going to marry—

" ' Put your hand in the creel,
Get an adder or an eel.'—

meaning that they'll get a wife that'll sting them, or one that will slip through their fingers ; but Maister Walter will get just as

braw a wife as he could wish for. But she's no right yet ; she wants that bonnie sash you brought, Miss Wishart—where is it ?”

“ I left it downstairs.”

Ailie went off in search of it.

Teenie crossed the room, closed the door, and fastened it. Then she turned round, looking at Grace with such clear, honest eyes, but with an expression of distress in them.

“ I am not happy—I'm not content—I'll not be able to go on with it,” she said agitatedly.

“ With what ?” exclaimed Grace, startled by her words and manner.

“ You should have worn this dress,” she went on rapidly ; “ the morn should have been your wedding-day, not mine.”

“ Teenie !” (reproachfully).

“ I say it again, it should have been yours, not mine. I cannot believe it's so near ; I cannot believe that it's real. I've been waiting every day for something to happen

that would break it off—I've been almost hoping something would happen."

"But why should you hope for that!"

"Because of you."

"Me!" Grace drew breath, then softly—
"That's hard, Teenie."

"I did not mean to hurt you," was the impulsive cry of the girl; "I'm always doing what I don't want to do. I mean that you would have been better for him—that you are suffering; and you are so kind, and that makes it the worse."

Grace was very pale, but after the first moment of sharp pain and surprise, she was able to understand the passionate feeling which prompted the girl's words, and to sympathize with it. She was calm apparently. Two steps brought her close to Teenie; she reached up her hand, and rested it on the girl's shoulder.

"I will not seek to hide from you, Teenie, that you have pained and vexed me; but it is just as well that we should speak out to

each other at once, because I want you to be my friend, as I want to be yours, and we cannot be real friends so long as there is any doubt between us. You have been thinking about me, and you have forgotten Walter.”

“I wish I could forget him, it would be easy enough then to run away from all this fuss and worry.”

“Well, you see that you care so much for him, that you cannot run away from him” (laughing good-naturedly), “and so you are very cruel to him when you think he ought to marry somebody he does not care for.”

“But he does care for you.”

“I hope so, but not in the same way he cares for you.”

“And you like him.”

“Yes, very much, and always will.”

“And I come between you, and vex you and his father, and all his folk, and by-and-by he will be sorry too.”

“You must not say that—and you must not think that; if you were to leave him

now, I could not accept a man who I knew wanted somebody else to be his wife. You would not do that?"

"No."

"Very well; and I, thinking of his happiness, like him well enough to be able to say, 'Marry, Teenie, whom you love, and I am content.'"

"I could not say that, and if I did say it I would be sorry after; will not you?"

Grace was taken aback by the directness of the question, and she began to feel her patience a little exhausted.

"I cannot answer for my future feelings; but I promise that you shall not be disturbed by them."

"I am sorry I have vexed you," said Teenie, beginning to take off her dress, "but it has been a sore trouble to me to feel that I have come between you and him, and that I have angered all his folk."

"You must think of him, Teenie, and not of others."

“ I’ll try.”

They parted—an eager desire for friendship on both sides, and yet both conscious of something which rendered perfect trust and confidence in each other almost impossible.

Teenie threw aside her wedding-dress, and put on her ordinary gown. She went out, despite Ailie’s desire to try the effect of the new sash ; and seeing Dan, she called to him—

“ Come, father, I’m going for a sail ; maybe it’s the last we’ll have together.”

The skipper followed her down to the bay. She shouldered an oar, and marched over to the cobble. The tide was high, and the boat was floating. She sprang in, and used the oar manfully to push out from the shore. They passed from the sheltering arms of the bay, and the prow of the boat swung round to the tide. She shipped the oar, and leaning over the gunwale, her hands caught the waves at every dip of the boat.

The skipper stood up against the mast, arranging the sail, and the red rays of the

setting sun fell aslant the boat, crimsoning her face, and the water where her hands touched it. Above were great mountains, with bright copper peaks and borders; in the west, the sun, a ball of fire touching the top of the Grampians; around them, the cold green sea, chequered with brilliant red lakes. The keen gusts of wind, and the plashing of the waters, rendered the stillness of the evening more palpable.

A boat passed them slowly, sailing into the harbour of Rowanden. Its occupants were three girls and two youths; they had been out at Davies Bay, seeking mussels for bait. The girls were singing a song common among the fisher-lasses, to a slow tune which kept time with the rise and fall of the boat :—

“ Oh, gin I was married !
I’ve a’ thing weel preparéd.

* * * *

“ I’ve sax new chairs and a table,
A guid kail-pot and a ladle,
A braw new bed, and a cradle
To rock some wee body in.”

The voices of the singers were mellowed by the wind and sea, and the commonplace character of the words was lost in the beauty of the surrounding scene.

The boat floated on, the voices faded away in the distance, and Teenie suddenly raised her head.

“ I wish I was like them, father.”

“ What for ?”

“ They are so happy and content.”

“ Well, what should hinder you being the same ?”

“ I don't know ; but I am not the same.”

She was thinking what a simple life these girls had before them ; to mend the sails and nets, to get plenty of mussels for bait, to have something tasty for the guid-man when he came home, and to see him safe in from a stormy night's fishing—that was all their care. With the usual blindness of people who wish to be something else than what they are, she did not think of the times when their guid-man did not come home safe from

the storm, but some friend appeared with the news that the boat and crew and nets were all lost. She saw only the shadows of her own position, and did not balance them against those of others.

“Can we not sail out, father, and sail on across the water, and never come back any more?” she said, her hands playing fondly with the waves.

“What are you hawering at?” exclaimed Dan, amazed and puzzled by this whimsical humour.

“I want to get away to see the far countries and the strange sights you have told me about.”

“You’re a woman, and you’re gaun to be married the-morn.”

Dan mentioned that fact as an infallible remedy for all absurd fancies.

“I wish I was a man.”

“What better would you be?”

She did not reply. The boat rose and fell lightly with the waves, which gurgled merrily

against the prow as it cut its way forward. The sun dropped behind the distant hills, and in the gloaming the face of the water changed to dark green, and deepened in colour as the light faded. The copper clouds became black, and floated threateningly overhead. A distant sail crossed the horizon; a steamer, with its long-tailed comet of smoke, passed far out at sea. The lights of Kingshaven glimmered upon the water, and the lamps of the White Tower showed brightly in the darkening night.

Teenie felt happy; the exhilarating breeze, the surge of the sea, the motion of the boat, and the solitude were very pleasant to her. They cleared her head, and made her forget all the petty doubts which had been afflicting her; they soothed the restlessness which had disturbed and frightened her.

She passed to the stern swiftly and steadily. Dan was steering and minding the sail at the same time. She "coured" ("knelt" scarcely expresses the movement) down at his knees,

and peering up into his face in the uncertain light, she whispered—

“Are you sorry about the-morn, father? will you miss me when I’m away from the Norlan’?”

He dropped the rudder, and the rope with which he managed the sail; he gripped her by the arms, and the big frame of the man shook with emotion.

“My bairn!” he said hoarsely, “it’s like rugging the heart out o’ me to let you go; but you wish it.”

“Then I’ll not go.”

“Havers!” he growled fiercely, catching up the rope and the rudder again; and, utterly ashamed of his own brief display of weakness, he was ready to be angry with her. “We’s baith gang to the bottom if you dinna take tent. We’ll gang in now.”

She rested her head upon his knee, and did not speak. Occasionally his rough hand touched her brow, and passed through her

hair tenderly, whilst the waves plashed against the boat and the wind whistled in their ears.

They sailed into the bay safely in the dark.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MARRIAGE.



It had been agreed that everything was to be very quiet—no crowd, no strangers, and no fuss at the marriage. So the only guests were the members of the Dalmahoy family, the minister, and two friends of Thorston's—the one an extensive fish-curer, the other a ship-owner—both having business relations with their host.

But Dan could not allow the event to pass without making some sign to his friends in the village; so he had arranged for a substantial dinner at the inn, where the lads and lasses might eat and drink, and then “shak’

their foot"—that is, dance until they were tired—in honour of the occasion.

Rowanden was deeply interested. The fisher-wives and daughters felt that a special honour was being paid to them in the marriage of Dan Thorston's lass to the Laird's son; and the men were not behindhand in self-satisfaction.

A number of flags were hoisted in various directions, and the boats in the bay were similarly decorated. There was a very hearty desire to pay respect to the skipper—as well as to his daughter—who had been so long regarded by the simple community as a kind of chief. Work was struck for the day; and even if Dan had given the most unmistakable signs that there would be a "good shot," not a man would have gone out on Teenie's marriage-day.

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm in the village, everything was to be done quietly at the house.

Ailie was glorious in a silk gown—the first

she had ever possessed; and she had never dreamed of such wild extravagance, but Walter had presented it to her—and a new white cap, the voluminous frills of which shook with her intense enjoyment. The skipper was brilliant in a blue coat with brass buttons, and he was too much occupied by the many matters requiring his attention, to have time for regrets of any kind.

The sun was shining grandly on sea and land; there was not a cloud to shadow the happiness of the party.

Miss Burnett was arrayed in the latest fashion from Edinburgh. She was dignified and condescending, and young as ever. Alice was younger still, and quite playful in the delight with which she occupied the position of bridesmaid. Grace Wishart was rather pale, but quiet and helpful; several confused arrangements were put into order by her, and nobody knew there had been anything wrong. She was principal bridesmaid; and of all those who wished the bride

a happy future, none did so with more fervour than Grace.

Teenie was very silent, often looking at Grace, but showing no nervousness ; she rather displayed that kind of defiance under which people sometimes hide great agitation.

Walter was grave, as if he were sensible of the serious responsibilities upon which he was about to enter. His brother, Colin Burnett, was the "best man," and he was as cool as if he had served an apprenticeship in marriage ceremonials.

The Laird came in the carriage, was received with loud cheers by some loons who had gathered about the doors, and he was gratified. He entered the house, and was somewhat disappointed at the smallness of the company, although he had himself agreed that things ought to be done quietly, and although he saw that the little parlour was pretty well crowded as it was. He was, however, magnanimous as usual, and waived

all objections of his own in consideration for the majority.

Mr. Hutcheson, the minister of Kings-haven—a bald-headed and long-bearded gentleman, who had seen much of the world, and had settled down here for the sake of retirement and leisure, which he did not find—performed the ceremony.

“Do you take this woman to be your wedded wife?”

“Yes,” said Walter very decisively.

“Do you take this man to be your wedded husband?”

“Yes,” answered Teenie firmly, and almost as if her teeth clenched upon the word to give it emphasis, indicating that all doubt and hesitation were at an end from that moment.

Then came the prayer and the exhortation, the signing of the register and the “marriage lines,” which were handed to Teenie, and it was all over. How little there seemed to be to do! what a brief space it occupied, and

yet what a difference it made ! There stood the bride and groom bound to each other—for life.

Teenie did not know any difference ; she felt a little shy and a little anxious, but she was just the same now as she had been half an hour ago ; and yet there was the man standing beside her who claimed the devotion of all her future years.

“ How funny ! ” exclaimed Miss Burnett.

“ It’s so nice,” said Alice, “ and so simple—I wish somebody would marry me.”

“ I salute you, Mistress Walter Burnett,” said the Laird, kissing her.

“ Faith, I’ll do the same,” cried Colin, who, in right of his position as groomsman, kissed the bride.

“ It’s beautiful ! ” cried Alice, laughing.

Teenie rather shrank from these marks of favour, and she looked at Walter—her husband ; she felt timid as she thought of that, and wondered if there ever could be any mysterious authority which he should exert

over her, that would make her feel indifferent to her father, and to all the old associations.

"Dear wife," whispered Walter, putting his arm around her in the presence of all the folk.

"Toots!" she cried, and sprang away from him.

The carriage was waiting for them: they were to spend the first few days of their new life in Edinburgh, and they were to drive to the Kingshaven station. They made a pretence of eating somewhat of the substantial lunch which Ailie had prepared, and then took their places in the carriage.

They were surrounded by a crowd of the fishers, their wives, and daughters, who had come up to the house in spite of the skipper's injunctions, and hailed the bride and bridegroom with loud cheers and blessings. Habbie Gowk rode through the crowd on his donkey, much flushed, and much more excited than was apparently necessary even on

this occasion. Most surprising of all, he had none of his ballads in his hand.

“Wish you joy, sir—wish you joy, mem,” he said somewhat thickly, but with a peculiar assumption of familiarity, and with even a degree of patronage, which was extraordinary in him, whose good-nature generally extinguished every thought of self; “and you may wish me joy too, for what do you think——”

He paused, not for a reply, but to give greater effect to his words.

“What do you think?” he cried, looking all round him proudly, and then nodding to the Laird. “It’ll please you to ken, sir, as it will my friends here, lawyer Currie has just tellt me that *I* am the heir to the Methven fortune; and I am gaun to gi’e the biggest present of any to Thorston’s lass.”

There were astonishment and laughter at this half-drunken announcement. Then cheers, blessings, and old shoes showered

upon the newly-married couple, as the horses moved slowly through the crowd.

“Hurray!” for Dan Thorston’s lass, for the Laird, for his son, and for the Methven heir, as the missiles flew after the carriage, and guns were fired, and everybody was wild with delight. That was how they managed things quietly.

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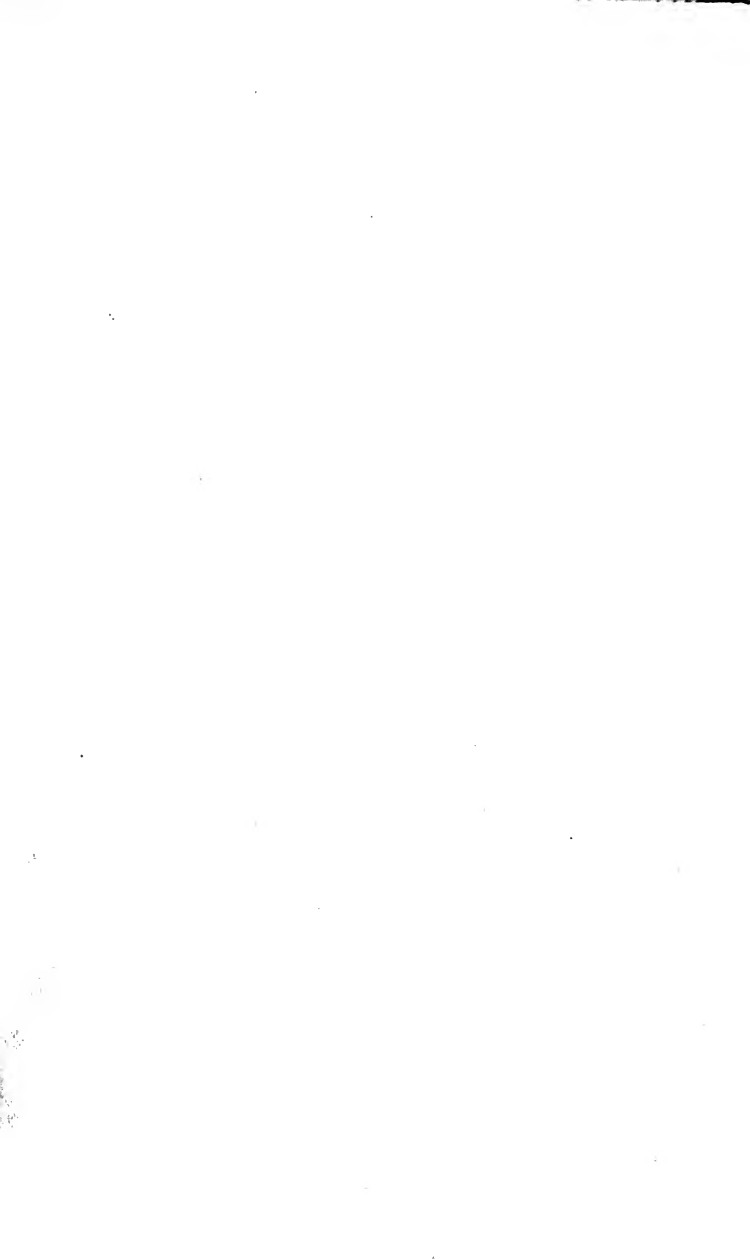
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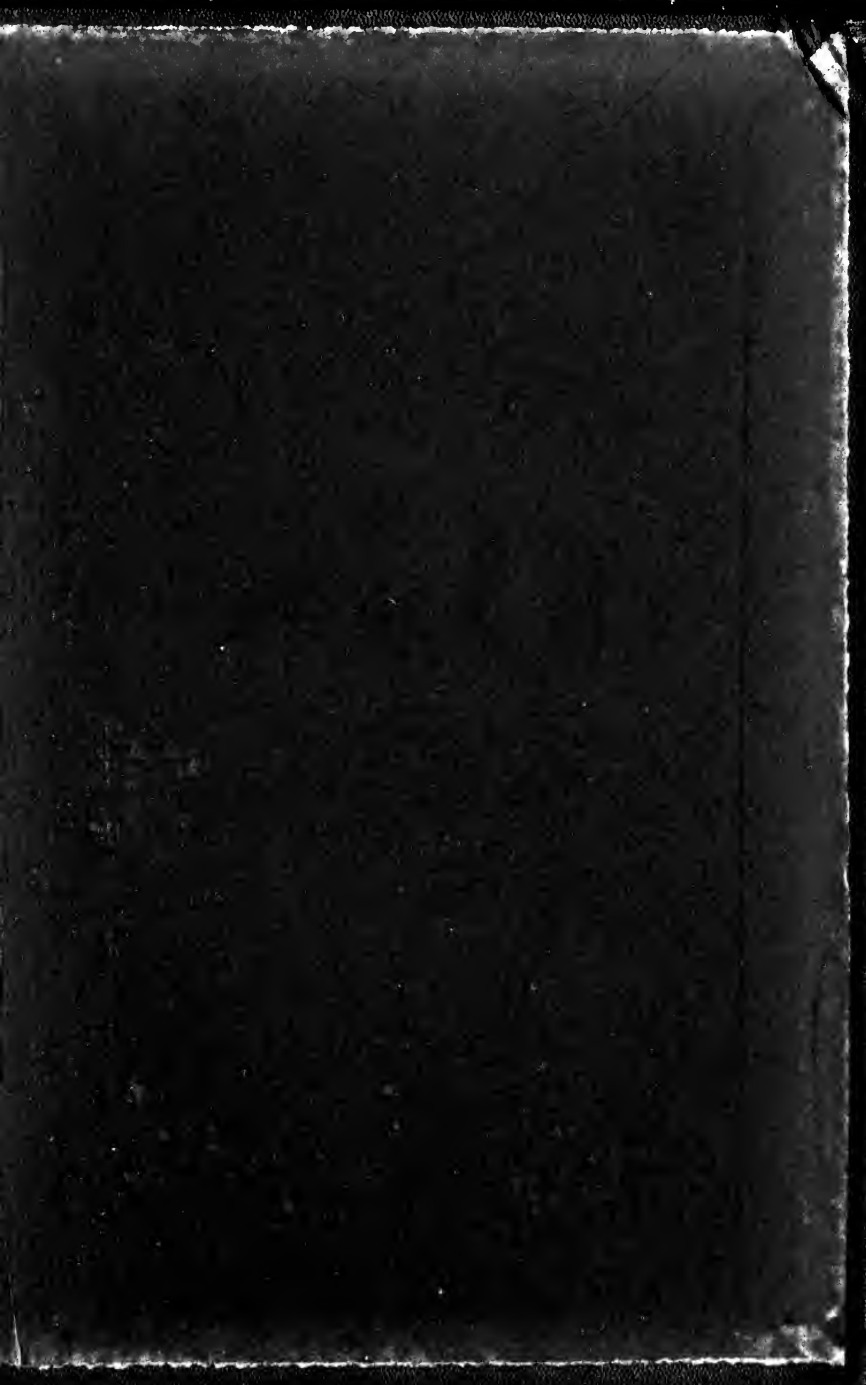
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